

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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HESTER'S HISTORY.

A NEW SERIAL TALE.

CHAPTER XXIV. ON A SUMMER EVENING, AT SHANE'S CASTLE.

THERE is a little village near Dublin called Santry. In the days of my story there was a familiar excitement dear to the children of this village, which was the sound of a post-horn blown lustily from the distance, swelling nearer and nearer, which was also the sight of a wonderful coach coming whirling down the road, the coachman's scarlet coat shining through clouds of yellow dust. But one glowing May-day there was a new excitement in store for the children of the village of Santry. A crowd of a thousand gloomy men came, and gathered in a field beside the road. And the children looked on in wonder, while car and cart, ploughshare and barrow were dragged from shed and from stable-yard, and placed in a strange barricade across the road. And when the coach came cheerily along, bringing its triumphant music down the hill, a few of those silent men stepped forth from the field and took possession of the horses. The music ceased, the passengers were escorted with courtesy to the houses of the villagers, a light was put to the straw under the perch where the driver had smoked his pipe for many years, and the gay wonderful coach became a bonfire, to the terror and admiration of the children, and the grim satisfaction of those gloomy men. The children did not know what it all meant; but the nation did. Before twenty-four hours had passed war was declared, and the country was in arms. A week passed, and battles had been fought and won, and fire and sword raged through the land.

The men of the North had not yet arisen. They waited in awful quietude the signal of their leader. It was during this terrible pause that Sir Archie Munro received an urgent message from his friend Lord O'Neal. The message was simply an invitation to dinner. A safe message; though this was hardly a time for giving dinners. But Sir Archie knew well that there was something important to be said—something which could not be trusted upon paper. Lord O'Neal was known to be a loyal man, and his passport in Sir Archie's hand was

sufficient protection to bring him safely from Glenluce to Shane's Castle.

It was a glorious evening, about the first day of June, when Sir Archie Munro rode through Shane's Castle Park. He entered at the Randallstown gates, by which the silver Maine dives under its bridge at the entrance to the little town. He turned his head to see the image of the golden sun quivering in the water, and the cozy village nestling among its May-flowers, and turf-smoke, and apple-trees, away beyond the river, across the rugged bridge. But when he plunged into the park the river went with him; though hidden for a time behind the primrose dells and dingles, the green slopes and wooded hills. Now he had miles of smooth verdure on either hand, with, in the distance, golden bars of sunset glowing behind files of young trees that mustered on the upland. Now tall grand firs rose and confronted him at a sudden turning; directed him with their pointing fingers to lose himself in a sombre wilderness, where their more majestic brethren thronged together in dusky crowds, turning the day into night under the shadow of their foliage.

The darkness thickened. There was no sound of the horse's feet on the soft earth in the moist shade. A brown atmosphere of twilight lurked under the lofty roofing of the pines, and swept its heavy shade down their branches to meet the lower thickets. Then the ferns and the young saplings, the tall tufts and purple drifts of the wild hyacinth, the snowberry and the blackberry, the matted mosses, and the scarlet-headed stalks of the nightshade, sprang together in magnificent disorder, and wove themselves into masses to enrich the splendid gloom. Here and there fierce red sparks from the sunset came glowering with lurid eyes through little holes in the thicket, as if a fire had been getting kindled in the underwood.

Now an opening shone through the dusk. The trees stood aside, and suffered the pathway to lead the way up to a stately bridge. Under the arches of the bridge flowed the river, suddenly flashing from behind the sombre pine-forest, broader, fuller, more luminous than when last seen. A lordly river that for ages had laid its silver neck under the foot of the O'Neal, gathering legends and lilies as it hurried on its way to give its treasures to the mysterious keeping of the storied Lough Neagh. Now the cawing of rooks announced the neigh-

bourhood of the castle. "War! war!" they seemed calling to one another across the trees.

Another turning, and Sir Archie checked his horse, and sat gazing on the scene. There was the castle, a pile of hoary grandeur, with its roots in a green slope and its massive turrets in solemn relief against the burnished sky. There was the banshee's tower, the dwelling of the spirit who watched over the fortunes of the house of O'Neal. There was the face upon its side, sculptured in black marble, which had been placed there no one knew how, and which was to fall from its height and crumble into dust when the race of O'Neal should fail. There was the long rampart, with its rows of cannon levelled this moment at the sunset, its watch-tower at either end growing up out of the lough, hooded in ivy, with steps winding into the water. Beyond all these was the wide, shining, charmed Lough Neagh, stretching like a great sea to the horizon, shuffling gold and crimson from ripple to ripple of its little waves, baffling the eyes that would fain look into its enchanted depths for a peep of the "round towers of other days." Away round the edge of the enchanted lough crept the lovely shores, fringed with stately trees, streaked with pale shell-strewn beach, enriched with glowing drifts of wandering flowers, that carried their bloom to the very margin of the water. Beautiful are the banks of this weird Lough Neagh as the ideal dwelling-place of a poet.

"And God has made our land so fair!" said Sir Archie, bitterly, groaning as he thought of the agonised hearts that were rushing on death from end to end of the country. "Heaven has showered boons upon us surely. The misrule of men has added horror and desolation to the list."

There were no other guests at Shane's Castle that night. Sir Archie found his lordship alone. The dinner passed almost in silence. The guest was pale and grave, the host a little absent in his manner, albeit mindful of the courtesies of the occasion. The well-trained servants made strange mistakes, and came and went breathlessly, afraid to lose a word that might be spoken by those they served. But little was said between those who dined till the attendants had disappeared. Then host and guest sat over their wine, looking out upon the shifting shining lough, haloed with the mingled glory of its natural beauty and the glamour of its mystical traditions.

"This wine is excellent," said Sir Archie, breaking the silence.

"The wine is good enough," said Lord O'Neal, impatiently. "I did not bring you here, however, to praise my wine."

"I know it," said Sir Archie. "I have been waiting for you to speak."

"I beg your pardon," said his lordship. "These times are enough to break a man's temper. Well, you have come here at the risk of your life to hear what I have to say to you. Let me say it at once, for at a moment's notice we may be interrupted. I have to tell you

that you are a marked man, suspected of being secretly a leader of the rebels. I would counsel you to enlist under government at once, to take an open decided part, which will silence enemies—which will save you from destruction."

Sir Archie, pale and stern, put down his glass, leaned forward on the table, and looked his host in the face.

"And you are an Irishman," he said, "who give me this advice?"

Lord O'Neal's eye fell. A dark blush sprang to his face, and mounted to his very hair.

"I am an Irishman," he said, "and I give you this advice. I give it you because patriotism is useless at this crisis. England has been too clever to leave us strength to succeed in such a struggle as the present. Our veins have been bled to make her strong to crush us. She will crush us, and she will not spare us one agony in the operation. Munro! I would not see your name and race swept off the land: never to speak of your six feet of noble manhood, which I have loved. For, Munro! we have been friends!"

"Ay, O'Neal!" said Sir Archie, and laid his hand on the lord's open outstretched palm. A long close clasp, and then the hand of each was withdrawn, and the two sat silent, gazing on the shifting, glittering, mystical lake. Maybe it told them the truth, that they never should sit so together again; that ere many days had passed one of them should kiss the dust, cut down to the death at his own gates; the other should be a wanderer in bitter banishment.

Sir Archie was the first to speak.

"O'Neal," he said, "no two sons of this distracted country need quarrel because their opinions differ as to the possible cure of her misery, so long as those opinions are grounded upon honesty. We live in the midst of inextricable confusion and horror. Our suffering blinds us, and no wonder if we dash against each other, rushing about madly, looking for some outlet from despair. I believe with you that no such outlet will be forced in the present struggle."

"None," said Lord O'Neal, gloomily.

"Listen to me then," said Sir Archie. "I will not buy my own safety by accepting a situation as executioner of my tortured countrymen. I—"

"Hold!" cried Lord O'Neal, fiercely. "I am not a Castlereagh!"

"God forbid!" said Sir Archie. "But neither am I your judge. You know your own conscience best. I am not going to reproach you, but to expose to you my own views and intentions. In the first place I may tell you that the suspicions you speak of are unfounded, for I am grieved—ay, ashamed—to have to say that I am not a leader of the rebels. I ought to have been a leader of the rebels, and so ought you, and every man who has influence and power in the country. We have been systematically, and in cold blood, goaded to resistance. If we had all arisen as a man and resisted,

we should have compelled our rulers to treat us like the rest of humanity, and the world would have looked on and respected us. But we are timid; we stand aloof: we think to buy peace, to save bloodshed. Some of us are bought, others are led astray by our feelings or our theories. And so we sit on in our high places and groan idly; or worse, we turn a dastardly sword against our own, while the masses of our countrymen who have suffered, who have been familiarised with such tortures that the most horrible death has no terror for them, while they struggle wildly and are lost, for want of the assistance which they had a right to expect from us, which we have refused them. I tell you, O'Neal, that my own Glensmen, whom I had thought to save and to serve, look on me with suspicion, as a coward, who will not risk life or property by putting himself at their head. They would not trust me now. They have ranked under other leaders. And I know that I have deserved it. I have earned it by my folly in hoping for humane measures from England. I stand alone now, shunned and suspected by both parties. Heaven knows that I have suffered, and acted for the best. But I tell you this solemnly, O'Neal: I would to God I had gone hand-in-hand from the first with Wolfe Tone and Lord Edward Fitzgerald."

Sir Archie suddenly stopped speaking, and buried his face in his hands.

"You are a madman!" cried Lord O'Neal, rising hastily. "You should know that when you speak in this manner your life is not worth a moment's purchase."

"I know it," said Sir Archie, rising also, and folding his arms calmly. "I know I am in your power. I knew it when I came here this evening, intending to avow to you all that was in my mind. As for my life," he added, bitterly, "a brave man will rather die than feel dishonoured, even if no one in the world know the dishonour but himself. It may be that I have precious stakes in life as well as another, that I had hopes as sweet as heaven, and plans which a proud old age might have rejoiced to see accomplished. Yet the beginning and end of all my hopes and plans are in this: I have loved my country, and I have loved my countrymen. Rather than turn a sword against my people, I will give my blood to slake the thirst of the government; as far as it will go."

Lord O'Neal had walked away to a window. By-and-by he came back with tears in his eyes, and trembling as only a good man can tremble.

"Munro," he said, "you are a brave fellow. Would to God we were all more like you! English gold has corrupted us; English smiles have lured us; English whips have scourged us; and English love has flattered us. We are like the house divided against itself that shall not stand. We are divided; and we shall be snapped in pieces like the streaks of flax that might have made a rope too tough for breaking. You and I have chosen different paths. But at least we are—brothers."

"Always, O'Neal," said Sir Archie, solemnly. And again the men pressed each other's hands.

"Not yet, Munro," said Lord O'Neal, as Sir Archie prepared to leave him. "I have still a word to say to you. Sit, and let us drink a glass together. We shall not drink such another for—how long? God knows! Futurity, even of a to-morrow, is strangely hid from us. When next we meet we shall know many things which we would now give much to discern."

And the lord looked dreamily across his glass, at the shadows falling gravely over the lough. Was any thought in his heart of the shadow of death so soon to descend upon the prime of his days? The death that was his portion as a son of a doomed land.

"I wanted to tell you," said his lordship, rousing himself from his reverie, "that it is supposed you have got a spy in your household."

"I think that can hardly be true," said Sir Archie, "for I know all the servants at Glenluce. They have each been many years a part of the family, and I am acquainted with their friends and connexions."

"This person is not a servant," said Lord O'Neal. "She is the friend of a Lady Humphrey, a woman who has been building up a case against you. Her name is Hester Cashel. She has hardly been a year at Glenluce; but I understand she has made the most of her time."

Sir Archie started. A flush came over his face, which had been so pale. Then he laughed a little short indulgent laugh at the ignorant folly of this news which his friend had just told him.

"It is a great mistake," he said, softly. "It is the perfection of a mistake. Any one inventing such a story ought to have chosen a better heroine."

Lord O'Neal was surprised at the change in his friend's manner. He looked at him with interest, and made a guess in his own mind.

"Well, I advise you to look to it," he said; "the name may be a mistake, but some one in your household is playing you false."

Soon after this it was dark, and the moon arose. Sir Archie mounted his horse, and Lord O'Neal walked by his side along the shores of the mysterious Lough Neagh. The warm still air was laden with the odours of the hawthorn and wild orange-tree. The moonlight came trickling through the shrouded glades; and afar off in the distance, the river could be discerned, dreaming beneath a coverlet of silver, under the watchful shadow of the pine-trees. Lord O'Neal walked to the spot where the rooks slept in their nests. An old rook, awakened by the sound of the feet and voices, hurled his cry of "war! war!" downward out of his branches on the heads of the passers-by; just as the friends clasped hands and parted.

CHAPTER XXV. LADY HUMPHREY'S MESSENGERS.

THAT terrible spell of quietude lasted for days in the North, while in the South towns were burned to the ground, and doings were

on foot, a whisper of which were enough to curdle the blood and make the heart turn sick. People seemed fixed in a sort of living death, during that fearful pause. They spoke in whispers, and their eyes were riveted in a horrible fascination on the future of every hour that approached. What was about to happen? When must it happen? The North men did not delay from mere sluggishness. They waited the signal of their leader. Antrim and Down had the knee bent, the bow strained. When would the awful oracle speak?

Loyal men put their heads together, and said, with bated breath, "They have not risen yet—they shall not rise." Lord O'Neal summoned a meeting of magistrates in his ancient town of Antrim, to be held on the seventh sunny day of that glorious glowing June. Then out spoke the oracle, and the flag of war was hoisted. The leader lifted his voice, and gave the signal to waiting thousands.

"To-morrow we march on Antrim," said his mandate; "drive the garrison of Randalstown before you, and haste to form a junction with the commander-in-chief. Dated, First day of Liberty, Sixth day of June, Seventeen hundred and ninety-eight."

Up rose the rebels. The fisherman left his boat, the smith his forge, the gardener left his roses to wither in the fierce sun, the farmer thought it little that his fields should be laid waste and his crops trampled down. What was a man, or what were his acres, to the future of the country? Oppression was to be grappled with, and driven out of the land. Men and men were to meet, and settle this old grudge. Who feared death, or cared for pain? The supreme moment of a life-long tragedy had arrived. Let the husband bid farewell to the wife, and the wife give up the husband. Let the women become strong as men, and the men patient as women. Let the God of nations, the God of armies, the long-enduring God of peace, judge this day between the weak and the strong.

Down they poured from glen and mountain, up they started from field and bog, those outraged long-suffering men. They grouped themselves into bands, and they massed themselves into columns. Their wrongs were in their hearts; desperation in their faces. Soon from high country and low country they were marching upon Antrim.

On the evening of the seventh of June dire tidings came flying through the glens. All day long the mountains had basked in the hot sun, and the golden clouds had brooded over them as luxuriously as if the world had entered into a long truce with evil—as if there were nothing to be thought of for futurity but the splendour and perfection of creation. An air of holiday repose sat smiling on the hills and the fields. There was no sound of labour, no sturdy steps tramping to and fro. It might have been a Sabbath, only there were no staid groups round the door of the little church, no laughing lingers by the river, no neat-shod lasses stepping over the stiles. It was as if the valleys had

opened and swallowed the inhabitants, leaving solitude and nature face to face.

In the gardens at the castle there were long hot yellow paths, and beds that were blazing heaps of colour, with here and there intense brown shadows huddled out of the way under a stooping frowsy bush, or a tree with sprawling branches. It was only June, but the roses had been born early this year, and already they thronged in full-blown multitudes, laying their hot cheeks together in the fiery air, or bearing down their branches, seeking moisture on the burning earth. And the gardener was not at hand, to give drink to the thirsty, to prop, nor to bind. There was no relief to be had for the most pampered blossom; no hand even to gather up her leaves when she fell. So it was not because of human bloodshed that the flowers faded and shrivelled as in fear. They merely sickened and drooped of individual neglect and ill-treatment. Neither when the throstles and the black-birds were all mute the livelong day, was it because they could see horrid sights from their perch in the highest boughs. It was only that they were too faint and hot to sing.

Lady Helen had taken to her bed several days ago, and erected a strong wall of novels and smelling-bottles between herself and an unsympathising and most inconsiderate world. Her dogs lay on a cushion at her feet, and to these she made her moan; who could offer no irritating words of comfort in reply. Miss Golden was unwell, and there was not the slightest doubt but her disease was pure panic. She did not go to bed, however, nor did she make complaints. She held by her former assertion that she was not a coward. Her own particular woes relating to the lost Pierce and Hester's audacity, made some distraction for her thoughts, and divided her mind with the terror of the moment. It diverted her a little to annoy Hester. She could not forgive her for having possessed that well-known ring, still less for having so heartlessly returned it. She also held her guilty for having attracted the grave Sir Archie, and it piqued her curiosity that Hester's sentiments were secret on this subject. She could not even discover if the girl were conscious of the conquest she had made. At all events, it was a nice safe course to annoy the little minx. And in pursuance of this idea she kept Hester hard at work on the trousseau for an imaginary wedding.

So Hester sat in her tower-room sewing a bridal dress. The scanty curtains of tapestry—with their faces no longer nodding, in the absence of all breeze—were looped back far away from the window, the sash of which was open, vainly gaping for a draught of air. Hester, very pale, maybe with the heat, a little sick, maybe with the fright, sat puckering crisp white satin and fingering sumptuous lace. Her head was full of a strange mixture, enough to make a brain reel, of a wedding and finery, and flaming towns; of agonised wives and mothers, and strong men dying in their blood. And if sometimes tears would well up straight

out of her heart to her eyes with a keen pain, and drop about without a moment's notice, endangering the purity of the white satin, who, watching her from a corner, could have found fault with a sad seamstress, saying that it was a wicked thing to shed tears over a bridal dress? Who need speculate on those tears, foolishly asking what they meant? When sorrow was reigning from end to end of the land, why pry into one simple heart looking for secret sources of grief? Hester's tears, falling, kept time with the falling of the tears of a multitude. A few bitter drops more or less need make no wonder. Let them flow, and be swallowed up in the ocean of a nation's anguish.

The servants at the castle had taken to novel ways of life, and no one had heart to check them; even had any one had eyes to see that the wheels of the household needed oil. If they were seldom at their posts, there was no one to observe it; if they stood about in groups half the day with pale faces and red-rimmed eyes, there was no one at hand to reprimand them. If the meats came burnt to table and the wrong wine was decanted, was there any one with appetite to discover these mistakes? If the rarest gem of the drawing-room were swept down to the floor in fragments by a nervous twirl of Bridget's tremulous duster, who cared? The drawing-room was a desert. It might be arranged or it might not be arranged. The flowers in the vases might be dried up and mouldering there, for nobody thought of looking whether or not.

About sunset of that seventh glowing evening of June, Sir Archie was walking up and down his study floor. That long burning day had passed like a nightmare over his head. He had been abroad, and had looked upon the ominous desolation of his glens. He knew where his stalwart men were to be found, and he knew what was the work on which their strong hands had fastened.

A messenger came knocking upon the door of Glenluce Castle, and, panting, pushed his way into the presence of Sir Archie. He had news. A battle had been fought at Antrim—fought well by the rebels, but lost. Lord O'Neal had been carried to his castle to die. There had been another hard fight at Larne. A rumour was on foot that Sir Archie Munro had been declared to be a rebel; that Colonel Clavering and his soldiers were marching towards the glens to attack Glenluce Castle. The women and children, the old men and the cripples, were flying to Sir Archie for protection. Even now they left their cottages with their babies and their crutches. Even now they came breathless down the hills and up the roads. Would Sir Archie take them in under shelter of the castle roof? Would Sir Archie shield the innocent and weak?

"All that the castle will hold," said Sir Archie. "Let them come. We can house a good many, thank God! While there is space for one there cannot be enough; so we have elbow-room at the window to ply our guns."

He despatched a messenger to reassure the people, and then Sir Archie made a review of his position. Of able-bodied men he had only a few servants. He shuddered to think of the women of his family. Why had he not forced them to leave the country long ago? Regrets were idle now. His mother must be kept as long as possible in ignorance of what was impending. Thank God she was a willing prisoner in her own retired room. The young girls must be guarded. "I wonder," thought Sir Archie, "if poor Madge will stand my friend?" And he sent a message to the Honourable Madge.

The servant forgot her manners in her fright. She burst open Miss Madge's door without even the ceremony of a knock. Miss Madge had spent this day shut up in her chamber alone. Miss Madge! where was Miss Madge? Some gay garments stirred in a dark corner of the room. Miss Madge was on her knees, with her face against the wall. When might one pray if not now? Miss Madge had the soul of a warrior, but she might not wear a sword. Miss Madge had the heart of a lion, but the battles must rage on without her presence or her help. Miss Madge must give assistance, else she would die of this suspense. So she bent her knees on a hard floor, and turned her face to a dark wall, and she battered the gates of heaven with her prayers.

Miss Madge was on her feet in an instant, cheerful and alert. Ere long she had got instructions from Sir Archie, and was giving orders about the castle as if for a festival. She walked into Hester's room, where she found Hester and Miss Janet sitting trembling side by side; the unfinished bridal dress lying between them.

"We are going to stand siege, my dears," said the Honourable Madge, briskly, quite as if she had been saying, "We are going to give a ball." "The servants are a little frightened, naturally, and Lady Helen is not to know of it at present. There is much to be seen to, many arrangements to be made. Which of you is strong enough to step about and help me?"

"I am ill, Miss Madge," said Janet; "I am really ill." And she looked it. "I could not go about with you. I believe I shall die of the fright. I hope it may happen before they come up here to kill me. At all events I shall wait here. I could not go down and ask them to do it."

"I thought you were not a coward," said Miss Madge, with some scorn.

"That was a boast—only a boast!" wailed Miss Golden. "I did not think that war was going to walk up to the castle gates. I am a coward now I tell you. I am afraid. Oh, I am afraid!"

And she curled herself upon a sofa, and buried her blanched face in the cushions.

Miss Madge put her shoulder against the couch and wheeled it into a corner, out of reach of the window.

"What is this for?" asked Janet, pettishly. "Only to be out of the way of bullets," answered the Honourable Madge, shortly.

A scream came from the sofa, followed by murmurings and mournings. "Oh, England! Oh, Pierce! Oh, wretched, wretched Janet!"

"I will send some one to sit with you," said Miss Madge, over her shoulder. Then, "Come," she said to Hester, "I see you are willing for work!" And grasping Hester's hand she led her off out of the room.

"We shall have to sort the people you know, my dear," said Miss Madge. "See how they begin to pour in! We shall have to set up a nursery, and dormitories for the sickly old men. Not that I expect there will be much sleep to be had here to-night, but it is better to be in order. Sir Archie is busy getting the guns fixed at the windows. I don't know that we can help him much at that. But there may be wounds to be dressed during the night. Do you happen to know anything of dressing a wound?"

"I have seen them dressed at the hospital," said Hester.

"My dear, that is most fortunate. We shall prepare some linen bands, and I will boil some healing herbs."

They went out to a kitchen garden to pluck the herbs, on a high ground away at the back of the castle. A solemn moon had risen, and the world was calm and cool. The soft velvet outline of the hills rose darkly against the mellow sky. All the perfume was streaming out of the flowers with the dew. The hammering at the windows where the guns were getting fixed was the only sound heard, except now and then at intervals the lowing of the cattle, coming down with its homely echo from the mountains.

Hester mounted on a bench, and looked around her. "What are those lights, Miss Madge," she said, fearfully—"those lights that are smouldering on the hills? How they spring up! And another, and another! Good God! the flames are everywhere!"

"Those are the cottages—fired," said Miss Madge. "Don't faint, child—don't faint, I tell you. You can be brave if you wish. Will you be brave? Are you brave?"

"Yes," gasped Hester. "It is only the first shock."

"Good girl!" said Miss Madge, approvingly, brandishing her bunch of fresh herbs in Hester's face to revive her. "My dear, we are living in history—in the history of our time."

CHAPTER XXVI. FIRE AND SWORD.

THE enemy was approaching. The people kept pouring in, frantic with terror, crouching into the corners which Miss Madge assigned to them. Wailing children, fainting mothers, mourning old men, and weeping girls. The windows were barricaded, except just where the guns protruded. Sir Archie, with his few assistants, stood ready at their posts. After a horrible spell of suspense the soldiers could be heard mustering without, more and more arriving, trampling of hundreds of feet, prancing and floundering and terrible jingling of cavalry,

shouting of fierce orders, oaths and triumphant menaces, and hideous mirth, and, finally, the opening roar of the guns.

Sir Archie replied gallantly to the salute. A hurried glance below smote his heart with the forlornness of his hope. Yet his courage did not fail. How were the soldiery to know that but a crowd of helpless people and a handful of strong men were all the force that opposed them from those windows? If but the fire could be kept up! Every morsel of metal about the castle was seized upon as treasure, and Hester and Miss Madge got a lesson in making bullets. A crippled old soldier, who had fought bravely for England in his youth, taught them and helped them. And so the night wore on. A piteous crowd half dead with fear, and so, happily, dumb; half a dozen grim desperate men feeding their guns; two screaming women, mad with terror, shut up in their several rooms with their attendants; two other women, pallid faces soiled with smoke, low steady voices, hearts braced up with courage for the emergency, swift steps and blackened hands, toiling over a fire in a kitchen making bullets; nimble-footed boys, who were the making of brave men, running swiftly up and down, carrying fragments of new-found lead, bearing the newly-fashioned slugs up to the gunners; barricaded windows, darkness, deadly silence, smothered shrieks, muttered prayers, groans, and again silence, with over all the sickening, maddening roar of the assault, with the pressing, and the tramping, and the threatening of the assailants. These things were known within the castle. A glimpse of the scene without was like the opening up of hell: the glare of fire everywhere upon hosts of devilish faces, upturned, thirsting for blood.

"Miss, miss!" said a voice at Hester's elbow. It was Pat, the good-natured butler.

"I'm makin' bould to spake up sharp to you, miss," said Pat. "There's not a blessed minute to be lost. I tell ye this is a more serious business than we tuk it for at the startin'. There's swarms and swarms o' them out bye, an' there's new ones comin' on, hivin' over the lawns, an' the roads. I tell ye, miss, it's Sir Archie they want, an' ye must coax him to make off. I ax yer pardon, miss, but there's nobody could coax him but yerself. There's a smart trusty boy, with a stout bit of a boat, lyin' waitin' at the shoulder of the bay. He can get off out o' the back, an' creep along the ould moat. The devil a sight they'll see o' him, an' we'll keep the guns blazin'. The sea's like Lough Neagh, an' there's not a breath o' wind. A stout couple o' oars will take him across to the Mull o' Cantire afore he's missed!"

"I'll tell him," said Hester.

"An' miss, I ax yer pardon. I mane ye well; feth I do! But it'd be as good if ye'd go with him. They're havin' it goin' that it was stories ye wrote to England that has brought down the murder on the masher. An' if the boys comes to believe it, they'll want to tear ye!"

"That is nonsense," said Hester. "A wild

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There was a terrible confusion in her head for some moments, but she knew pretty well that Sir Archie had been seized. She heard the soldiers cursing at the darkness, and one of them pulled away the barricading from the window. He fell as he did so by a shot from without. Now the flames, which seemed to have been licking round the roof, curled inward through the open window and caught the wood-work of the room. The shock of the sudden light restored Hester to her senses. She heard the soldiers jeering and exulting over Sir Archie.

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A scream came from the sofa, followed by murmurings and mournings. "Oh, England! Oh, Pierce! Oh, wretched, wretched Janet!"

"I will send some one to sit with you," said Miss Madge, over her shoulder. Then, "Come," she said to Hester, "I see you are willing for work!" And grasping Hester's hand she led her off out of the room.

"We shall have to sort the people you know, my dear," said Miss Madge. "See how they begin to pour in! We shall have to set up a nursery, and dormitories for the sickly old men. Not that I expect there will be much sleep to be had here to-night, but it is better to be in order. Sir Archie is busy getting the guns fixed at the windows. I don't know that we can help him much at that. But there may be wounds to be dressed during the night. Do you happen to know anything of dressing a wound?"

"I have seen them dressed at the hospital," said Hester.

"My dear, that is most fortunate. We shall prepare some linen bands, and I will boil some healing herbs."

They went out to a kitchen garden to pluck the herbs, on a high ground away at the back of the castle. A solemn moon had risen, and the world was calm and cool. The soft velvet outline of the hills rose darkly against the mellow sky. All the perfume was streaming out of the flowers with the dew. The hammering at the windows where the guns were getting fixed was the only sound heard, except now and then at intervals the lowing of the cattle, coming down with its homely echo from the mountains.

Hester mounted on a bench, and looked around her. "What are those lights, Miss Madge," she said, fearfully—"those lights that are smouldering on the hills? How they spring up! And another, and another! Good God! the flames are everywhere!"

"Those are the cottages—fired," said Miss Madge. "Don't faint, child—don't faint, I tell you. You can be brave if you wish. Will you be brave? Are you brave?"

"Yes," gasped Hester. "It is only the first shock."

"Good girl!" said Miss Madge, approvingly, brandishing her bunch of fresh herbs in Hester's face to revive her. "My dear, we are living in history—in the history of our time."

CHAPTER XXVI. FIRE AND SWORD.

THE enemy was approaching. The people kept pouring in, frantic with terror, crouching into the corners which Miss Madge assigned to them. Wailing children, fainting mothers, mourning old men, and weeping girls. The windows were barricaded, except just where the guns protruded. Sir Archie, with his few assistants, stood ready at their posts. After a horrible spell of suspense the soldiers could be heard mustering without, more and more arriving, trampling of hundreds of feet, prancing and floundering and terrible jingling of cavalry,

shouting of fierce orders, oaths and triumphant menaces, and hideous mirth, and, finally, the opening roar of the guns.

Sir Archie replied gallantly to the salute. A hurried glance below smote his heart with the forlornness of his hope. Yet his courage did not fail. How were the soldiery to know that but a crowd of helpless people and a handful of strong men were all the force that opposed them from those windows? If but the fire could be kept up! Every morsel of metal about the castle was seized upon as treasure, and Hester and Miss Madge got a lesson in making bullets. A crippled old soldier, who had fought bravely for England in his youth, taught them and helped them. And so the night wore on. A piteous crowd half dead with fear, and so, happily, dumb; half a dozen grim desperate men feeding their guns; two screaming women, mad with terror, shut up in their several rooms with their attendants; two other women, pallid faces soiled with smoke, low steady voices, hearts braced up with courage for the emergency, swift steps and blackened hands, toiling over a fire in a kitchen making bullets; nimble-footed boys, who were the making of brave men, running swiftly up and down, carrying fragments of new-found lead, bearing the newly-fashioned slugs up to the gunners; barricaded windows, darkness, deadly silence, smothered shrieks, muttered prayers, groans, and again silence, with over all the sickening, maddening roar of the assault, with the pressing, and the trampling, and the threatening of the assailants. These things were known within the castle. A glimpse of the scene without was like the opening up of hell: the glare of fire everywhere upon hosts of devilish faces, upturned, thirsting for blood.

"Miss, miss!" said a voice at Hester's elbow. It was Pat, the good-natured butler.

"I'm makin' bould to spake up sharp to you, miss," said Pat. "There's not a blessed minute to be lost. I tell ye this is a more sarious business than we tuk it for at the startin'. There's swarms and swarms o' them out bye, an' there's new ones comin' on, hivir' over the lawns, an' the roads. I tell ye, miss, it's Sir Archie they want, an' ye must coax him to make off. I ax yer pardon, miss, but there's nobody could coax him but yerself. There's a smart trusty boy, with a stout bit of a boat, lyin' waitin' at the shouldher of the bay. He can get off out o' the back, an' creep along the ould moat. The devil a sight they'll see o' him, an' we'll keep the guns blazin'. The sea's like Lough Neagh, an' there's not a breath o' wind. A stout couple o' oars will take him across to the Mull o' Cantire afore he's missed!"

"I'll tell him," said Hester.

"An' miss, I ax yer pardon. I mane ye well; feth I do! But it'd be as good if ye'd go with him. They're havin' it goun' that it was stories ye wrote to England that has brought down the murther on the masther. An' if the boys comes to believe it, they'll want to tear ye!"

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Now, though from an economical, moral restraint, self-denying point of view, the honourable gentleman, whom an American would have justly called "a whale at partridges," was a glutton, still, as a gourmet, we venerate his memory; he must have been a great, if not altogether a good, man, for if there is a plump, delicious, appetising dish in the world, it is a well roasted, little, young hen partridge. The month is now September, and walking all day over hair-brushes—viz. wheat stubble—has sharpened your naturally keen appetite to an almost dangerous edge. Then with your gun in the corner, your shooting-boots warming themselves against the fender for another day's work, and a pleasant friend opposite, you could eat a live horse, you would not stick at hashed hippopotamus; but you have a dish of smoking partridges before you, a small sea of delicious bread-sauce, and a little Greek hand-lamp full of gravy clear as Madeira; you are a man whose cornucopia of happiness a kind fate has for the moment brimmed almost to overflowing. It is in the very essence of real sporting that Nimrod, as well as Ramrod, should make his meal of the game he has spent the day in chasing. The ruffling walks among the long wet green and fallow turnip-leaves, and the bristling hair-brushes aforesaid, the peering over brows of hills, the keen watching of your favourite liver-coloured pointer, require, as a fitting consummation, the solemn sacrifice of the kitchen. The swift bright-eyed bird that this morning broke screeching over the stubbles with all his flurried ladies of the harem (as frightened as the Arabs in Vernet's picture of the Smala), lies now before you featherless, his bright eyes are shrivelled cinders, with a drop of gravy distilling sweetly from each, his neck is a corkscrew, his legs are crossed in mute and changeless gesture of humility and supplication. He is now an abstract article of food; motion, volition, gone; no fear, no love, no hatred. He lies there on his back, a mere delicious offering to the sense of taste. Carve him fair, that's all, and don't meanly hide away a wing under the débris as our friend Gorbly does when he carves, in order to discover it with triumphant wonder just after he has helped us to the forlorn wreck of the back, which has been lying on the dish for some time in front of the ambuscaded wing.

And here allow us to bait for a moment at the roadside inn of an episodic remark—one affectionate word to young and inexperienced persons beginning life, on carving. Remember the wise dictum of Dr. Johnson (who, by-the-by, was purblind, and could not help himself), "Pray consider, sir, the great utility of the decorums of life; cease to disparage them, sir, and let me no longer hear your sneers against the art of carving; you should praise not ridicule your friend, who carves with as much earnestness of purpose as though he were legislating. Whatever is to be done at all should always be well done." Good carving is the father of economy; a well carved joint

goes further, and is far better fare than meat mangled, chopped, and mashed. Bad carving is an insult to your guests (as Ude said, far more forcibly than Dr. Johnson, who, worthy old gentleman, to tell the real truth, did not quite know what he was talking about); "it is also inconsistent with good manners and economy, and evinces in those who neglect it not only a culpable disrespect to the opinion of the world, but carelessness, inaptitude, and indifference to an object of real utility."

Now let us return to covert, and pick up the covey again as quickly as possible. In the first place, as to choosing partridges in shops. The following rules are from the mouth of one of our most eminent French cooks. Young birds are known by their yellowish claws; grey, or even bluish, legs and claws may be of a tender age, but lamentably seldom. If the bird is tender, the beak should be black, and the extreme tip point of the wing bone sharp pointed and whitish. Old partridges are only fit for hiding away in consommés, in cabages, purées of lentils, sauces, or cold patties. The best partridges in France are those of Cahors in Languedoc, and the Cévennes. In the north of France those of Carhaix carry away the palm. The red-legged partridges, so common in the south of France, are abominated by our sportsmen, because they run for ever without rising. The white partridges, found only in the Alps and in the Pyrenees, are the most esteemed; the grey are of far less value. French cooks applaud the red-legged bird (the bartavelle) as having whiter and more delicate flesh than its grey and snowy cousins.

Perhaps a partridge cannot be cooked too simply. He is beautiful in his integrity. Still he is dainty larded (piqué or bardé); and they do wisely, who advise us to wrap the savoury and juicy bird in vine-leaf winding-sheets, which concentrate the flavour and retain the volatile essences. He is good, too, à la Polonoise, à l'Orange, à la prévalie, with parmesan, with truffles, en biberot, and in curling-papers. He makes a soup, a hot pie, and a famous vol-au-vent, with tomatoes. The partridge pies of Cahors and Perigord are as admirable as the terrines of Nérac, in which the happy partridges repose on beds of truffles and truffles on layers of partridges, alternately. The heads emerge from the centre of the pies like weathercocks, and are at once an ornament and an invitation. The ways of cooking partridge are innumerable; the complaisant bird lends itself to many pleasant disguises. Partridges are charming à la braise and à la daube, exquisite with carp sauce, not bad à maître Lucas, and delicious à la Czarine and à l'étouffade. The partridges à la Montmorenci are larded, then stewed, and served with a ragoût à la financière. The true French cook often tries to minister to the sense of sight at the same time that he titillates the palate, just as the clumsier Elizabethan cooks delighted in perfuming their dishes, so as at once to gratify the nose and charm the mouth.

On this principle the inventor of "Perdreux à la Barberie" stuck his birds over with small pieces of truffles in the shape of nails. They should be stuffed with chopped truffles and rasped bacon, and served with Italian sauce. The *perdreux à la crapaudine* are dipped in bread crumbs and then broiled. In the *perdreux à la Givry* (another dish for the eye as well as the mouth) the birds are mosaicked with rings of white onions, and black medallions of truffles. In the *compote des perdreaux* you stew the dear creatures with bacon, mushrooms, and small white onions. Old partridges boil well with cabbage. The *sauté* of partridges, too (fillets stewed with veal and ham), is by no means despicable, nor would Lucullus himself have despised partridge cutlets fried in crumbs and treated "en épigramme" with truffles and mushrooms. The *soufflé* of partridges is excellent; the flesh requires to be chopped and pounded, mixed with the yolks of five beat-up eggs, and lightly baked for twenty minutes. The *purée* and *salmi* of partridge are also savoury, but we prefer partridge puddings, and Ude highly recommends "the *quenelles de perdreaux à la Sefon*." These are made with the flesh of tender young partridges pounded and passed through a sieve; you mix with it eggs, pepper, salt, and allspice, and fill small puddings with the paste. For the sauce, use the world-famous *Béchamel*, cream, salt, and a little cayenne. The Jew Apella himself would not disbelieve in this dish.

A pheasant is a divine fowl—Colchis, or wherever he first rocketed from.

If the partridge had but the woodcock's thigh,
He'd be the best bird as ever did fly,

might be said with more justice of the partridge if he had only made up his little mind to be as big as a turkey, and yet preserved that inimitable flavour, gleaned from the healthy wheat-stubbles. A pheasant resembles a medlar in this, that he is insipid till he begins to decompose. A sure test of knowing when your bird is ripe (generally about six days) is to hold him by the leg. If blood drops from the beak he is ready; to the spit with him incontinently—for the hour and the bird have come. Another good test is to hang your pheasant up in the larder by his long, auburn-coloured, tail feathers; cook him the moment the feathers drop out and let their master fall. Be sure he falls soft. The best proof of a young bird is the shortness and obtuseness of the claw. Always choose a hen, if you can, for the feminine among pheasants, contrary to the ungallant Latin grammar rule, is more worthy than the masculine. It is difficult, French cooks say, in our damp climate to keep the pheasant long enough to develop the full game flavour.

The Parisians wrap their roasting pheasants in sheets of buttered paper, and their favourite sauces for the royal bird are verjuice or orange juice, and sauce de carpe. The pheasant is inimitable à la braise in filets, in pies, in *salmi*, in croquettes, hashed, in *soufflés*, in cutlets, or

in scollops. The good old English rule for a pheasant is forty minutes before a smart but not a fierce fire. And here a wrinkle, if you are not an artful man or woman. We can assure you, from experience, that such is the deceptive power of the imagination, that if you have only one pheasant for a dinner party, and want two, a fine young fowl kept for five days, and with his head twisted exactly like the real Simon Pure, will never be discovered under a friendly snow-drift of fragrant bread sauce. As a rule, all *entrées* that are made with partridges can be made also of pheasants, and the *petit deuil* (half mourning), *Monglas*, *Givry*, &c., are equally good, of whichever bird they are made.

The French cooks rejoice sometimes over the vast carcass of that European ostrich, the brainless Bustard—a bird of vast body, but diminutive mind. The last one known in England was killed, we believe, on the windy surface of Salisbury Plain, in the middle of last century, rather after the time the last wolf died in Scotland, and half a dozen centuries after the last beaver in Wales had expired, universally lamented. It is only after very rigorous winters that the bustard is ever found in the South of France; but, in 1804, they were not uncommon at Beziers, where competing gourmards used to offer as much as thirty-six livres for each. Bustards also came to Paris from Champagne, and frequently from the great plain of Chalons, which suited their habits and their extreme dullness. The camp has, no doubt, long ago made the once lonely plain undesirable. Young and well hung, the bustard is tasty; the flesh, it is asserted, combines the flavours of several sorts of game. It is generally roasted like wild goose, but sometimes eaten cold in pies, which, however, require a great generosity in lard, as bustard meat is by nature dry, and rather indigestible.

The French call the woodcock, who is all nose (as everybody knows), and is not remarkable for very regular features, the king of the marsh and the woodside—"le premier des oiseaux noirs." It is the choicest morsel of the gourmet, who loves it for its perfect flavour, the volatility of its principles, and the succulence of its flesh. It is the highest mark of esteem we can offer to a guest who may be useful to us. We devour even the humblest portions of his body—we honour him with far more reason than the Thibet people do their taciturn grand Llama. It is admirable *en salmi*, stuffed with truffles (this is, however, adding perfume to the violet); and fine with olives, à la Provençale, or à l'Espagnole. Finally, pounded, it becomes a *purée*, which even French cooks consider as the consummation of all luxury. Woodcocks should be eaten in solemn silence, and with all the honours, as the *plat des plats*. They hash well; they are superb *en croustades*. They are good in every way. One great authority particularly praises "the *salmi de becasses, à la Lucullus*;" in this dish the filets are sauced with pounded mushrooms, shallots, and parsley.

A hare that has run himself tender has, no

doubt, suffered much, but, nevertheless, by his sufferings has benefited the human race, and undoubtedly advanced civilisation. In buying a hare, however, throw overboard all sentiment, and concentrate your mind upon this simple question: Is there a small nut in the first joint of his fore claw? If it be there, the creature is still young and inexperienced—if it be gone, concentrate your mind again, whatever labour the effort may cost you, and turn the claws sideways. If the joint crack, that is a sign that, though not so young as he might be, the hare is still tender. If there be no nut, and moreover the claw do not crack, the hare is only fit to stew, or for soup, and he won't be, even in that way, so good as he might be. Everybody has some favourite dish, for which, in a weak moment, he might be induced to sell his reversionary interests, as the patriarch weakly did for the mess of pottage—that dish is in our case leveret, savoury meat, sweet, tender, encouraging. Of hares, those three-parts grown are the best. Mountain hares are better than hares from downs. This amiable creature adapts himself to almost any sauce; and, in spite of the learned opinion of Sancho Panza's Baratarian physician, who thought the meat terrestrial and melancholic, is one of the most digestible of viands.

The rabbit is, to his cousin the hare, what the fowl is to the pheasant. His flesh is white and more juicy, but is more insipid. If a hare's ear tear easily, his flesh will be tender. Dr. Kitchener has observed, that if the jaws of a rabbit yield to the pressure of the thumb and finger, the rabbit is young; if old, the jaw will not break. This is worth remembering.

The wild rabbit, browsing at daybreak and twilight on wild thyme, marjoram, and such odoriferous herbs, unconsciously devotes the best part of his life to educating himself for the spit and the saucepan. The Parisians, who justly despise tame rabbits, as cat-like monstrosities, tasting only of the cabbage on which they have been nurtured, disguise rabbit in half a hundred artful and picturesque ways, each better than the other: à la broche, en gibelotte, fricassée, à la Polonoise, à l'Italienne, à l'Espagnole, à la Rossane, au coulis de lentilles, in puddings, in the shape of eye-glasses and in curling-papers. One eminent writer on French cooking observes, that various celebrated old methods of cooking rabbits have now become unfashionable; but after all their kick-shaws, between ourselves there is nothing better than the sterling old English ways: the young rabbit fried in bread-crumbs, and its dryness relieved with liver sauce; the young boiled rabbit, moist and white, soured in white floods of thick and odorous onion sauce.

You may flavour and mingle each dish as you will, Yet the rabbit with onions is best of them still.

Another wrinkle. Most people like hare-soup, undoubtedly a thick, brown, high-flavoured compound; and when badly made, rather a burnt, pasty, and oppressive soup; still, if fair

play be shown, highly nutritious, and of a strong individual character. But on the word of an old epicure, of now seventy summers, hare-soup cannot be compared to rabbit, which must be first fried and then boiled down with alow consideration, after the usual conditions. It is milder and more balmy than hare-soup, and possesses a much finer and more exquisite flavour. We know no game-soup that can equal it.

In Patrick Lamb's highly curious Royal Cookery, 1710, the master cook of Charles, James, William, and Anne—he must have had some experience in delicacies—speaks very favourably of a now forgotten dish, which he is pleased to entitle "Rabbit Surprise." Let us dig up the recipe from the small Pompeii of one hundred and twenty-seven pages, for it sounds promising.

Cut all the meat from the backs of two half-grown rabbelets (that is not a bad word for young rabbit?), cut it in small slices, and toss it up in six spoonfuls of cream, with a bit of butter the size of half an egg (pullet's, not ostrich's), and a little nutmeg, pepper, and salt. Thicken this with a dust of flour, boil it up and set it to cool, then take some forced-meat made of veal, bacon, suet, the crumbs of French roll, raw eggs, parsley, onion, pepper, salt, and nutmeg, toss it up like the meat aforesaid, and place it round your rabbits. Then fill up the trough in the backs of the patient creatures with the prepared minced-meat and sauce, smooth it square at both ends, brush the top with a raw egg, and sprinkle grated bread over. Place them on a mazarine or patty-pan, and bake them for three-quarters of an hour, till they are a gentle brown. The sauce required is butter, gravy, and lemon; the garnishing, orange and fried parsley. By no means bad, we are strongly inclined to think!

The wild duck's bones are true thermometers, and regulate his winter flights. Even the French cooks allow that this inimitable and venerated bird is best eaten plain roasted, with a few tears of lemon dropped upon his brown smoking breast. The Bernardin monks were, however, fond of him in an appetising hash, the recipe for which was a special secret of the devout order. The finest sauce we know for duck, or any wild fowl, is one that Dr. Kitchener derived from Major Hawker, the celebrated sporting writer. It is perfect. Man wants but little here below, but this sauce he must have. A celebrated cook of 1816 used to charge a fee of a guinea for disclosing it. It would make even a politician who had rattled swallow all his early speeches. Here it is, for nothing. "One glass of port wine, one spoonful of caviare, one ditto of catsup, one ditto of lemon-juice, one slice of lemon-peel, one large shalot sliced, four grains of dark cayenne pepper (not Venetian red and brickdust), and two blades of mace. Scald and strain this, and add it to the pure gravy of the bird. Serve the duck (if it be a duck) in a silver dish, with a lamp under it, and let this sauce gently simmer

round it." The duck, who spends his useful life in flitting from lake to brook in search of rush-buds and olive-brown watercresses, would (if he could but taste this sauce) rejoice in being so embalmed, and exult in being so honoured. The teal used to be, and we have no doubt still is, slyly eaten by the self-denying Carthusians and Carmelites on fast days, it being Jesuitically regarded as an aquatic bird, and therefore half a fish. Saint Liguori, the most accomplished of casuists, especially rejoiced in this ingenious evasion of the severe laws of Lent. It is not impossible that he himself first drove the poulterer's cart through the Pope's decrees on this point. This evasive bird is gratefully cooked with olives, or truffles, with thistles, with oysters, with cauliflowers, and it is good in pâtés and in terrines.

The quail, humbly supine on his little mattress of transparent bacon, is an object agreeable to three senses. Enveloped in lard, or clothed with a vine-leaf, the plump little creature is equally delectable. A good roast of quails, even in Paris, costs more than two fat fowls (and this is no joke, for there are places where one fat capon can cost as much as twelve shillings). Of the French quails, the best are those of Montredon, near Marseilles. There are a thousand ways of disguising them; with beef marrow, truffles, herbs, and mushrooms; they are good à la braise, à la poêle, au gratin (with crumbs), with cabbages, or with lentils coulis. In the lark season it is not uncommon at hotels to disguise larks as quails, but an epicure, even though blind, could tell the difference; for though the lark is much in esteem with poets, and is indeed decidedly a quiet, amiable, well-disposed, and even respectable bird, he is only a toothpick, a mere pastime, in comparison with the exquisite bird that fed the Israelites in the desert.

One of the greatest efforts of Ude's life was the construction of an enormous game-pie, which the Earl of Sefton wished to present to the appreciative corporation of Liverpool. This pie was to be a monster proof of the author's learning and generosity. Its contents were to be of the best; it was to overflow with good things; it was to be an Amalthea's horn, brimming with *bonne-bouches*. One fine morning, inspired by the sunshine that streamed round him as he stood monarch of all he surveyed in the earl's kitchen—M. Louis Eustache Ude, formerly cook of Louis the Sixteenth—collected around him great piles of game, poultry, veal, ham, bacon, forcemeat, and truffles. His caskets of spices stood near him, open, a bin of flour was at hand, and huge rolls of flower-scented Devonshire butter were within call. Let us follow the alchemist of the kitchen through all his enchantments, for even to think of them with the mind's eye—if the mind's eye can think, which we do not feel quite certain about—gives one the keenest seaside appetite. Ude first buttered a large brazier pan, and then lined it as one would line a hat, with a thin unctuous sheet of fat bacon. In the centre, he

gravely placed a very large turkey, breast downward, well larded, and stuffed with four very fine boned and larded pullets, seasoned with salt, pepper, and allspice, and with forcemeat laid in the trenches of the backs. The great composer then deposited round the patriarch turkey, the centre of all, eight boned and larded pheasants, seasoned and stuffed with truffles, and inside each pheasant was a boned and larded partridge, on the principle of the Chinese puzzle, and promising well for the future. The chinks and cavities were filled in with truffles, calf's liver, bacon, livers of game and fowls, and the white flesh and dark opaque livers of six rabbits, which had been chopped into forcemeat to garnish the monster corporation pie. But this was a mere sketch at present. The troops were on the ground, it is true, but the real battle had yet to be won. A shovel of coals too much on the oven-fire, and the splendour of a Sefton might be doomed to dust and ashes. Ude, gay and sanguine, then stuffed in a good deal of larded veal, some special wedges of ham, and twenty pounds of fragrant and carefully culled truffles. He covered the whole with a sheet of fat bacon, seasoning it all over; he parted from it with a longing lingering look; and hermetically closing the brazier by putting a paper all round the cover, put it in the oven for a fiery probation of two hours. It was then allowed to get quite cool, and was tempered by imprisonment in an ice-house to make it thoroughly cold. Ude then dipped the brazier into warm water to loosen the contents, and, the first stage of the work of art being over, he removed the gravy and fat, and put the meat, &c., into a temporary purgatory of ice.

The paste had now to be made. He first threw about a coal-scuttle full of flour into a vast earthen bowl, and prepared the butter in a stew-pan with boiling water and some salt. The flour was beaten up into a paste with a giant wooden spoon, then worked on the dresser, and placed before the fire for a moment, covered with a cloth, to help the manipulation. So far, so good. Ude felt like Phidias, when chiselling out the form of Apollo, or like Cellini, when in the fiery agony of casting his famous statue of Perseus. The fate of Europe seemed to hang upon that pie. Heaven only knew what indigestions among the worthy corporation the failure of that paste might not occasion. Ude next spread on the honoured table of the venerated earl, a large thick sheet of paste, and moulded the inner walls of the treasure-house of delicacies. The iced meat was already firm, and jellied together to receive its envelope, which Ude skilfully lapped over the top. He then covered the top with a second vast sheet, and pasted it down over the first, shaping it as he did so, and moulding the walls with architectural hand and dexterous masonic fingers. When form and symmetry were obtained, Ude squeezed out of the fat putty-like paste, a projecting border to form the foot, and with nimble fingers pinched out a border and cornice-rims for the top. With

a large ring of paste the Ulysses of the kitchen framed a chimney to the pie, as a sort of ventilating shaft, and also shaped a garland of sharp myrtle-like leaves to wreath the ring and chimney aforesaid, while all around he wove a trellis-work of brittle thread, and spread vine-leaves of paste, and made a sort of low wall round the flue, to prevent the gravy and fat from boiling over, and so spoiling the monster corporation pie. The great work was now nearly accomplished; it only wanted two or three finishing touches from the master-hand. Ude brushed the pie with dore, and then gravely and thankfully placed it in a moderate and carefully-tempered oven. It took three long hours, and it was all the fire could do in that time to blend those flavours and soften those intermingled meats. Before he withdrew it from the oven, Ude, ever cautious, thrust with thoughtful probe into the chimney of the monster, a long keen larding-pin, to make the final assay, and try if the meat were soft enough and thoroughly done down to the lowest stratum. He next, with learned unctious and placid triumph, added, down the funnel, the gravy and fat hoarded from the brazier. He also made a jelly of bones of fowls, rabbits, turkeys, and pheasants, and some knuckle of veal and ham highly seasoned with spice, bay-leaves, sweet basil, thyme, cloves, mace, cayenne, and plenty of salt. Then reducing this jelly, part of it was poured, when boiling, into the pie. This pie took two days to become cold. It required great care to lift, as it was too heavy for one French cook. The remaining jelly was spread over the pie when it was opened. It was indeed a veritable chef-d'œuvre, reflecting much credit on Ude's heart, but more upon his head. It gave great satisfaction to the generous earl, who, as the cruel wits said, had intended giving the town a library, but was convinced that the pie would be more appreciated.

BOOKBINDING.

BOOKBINDING comes to glory among us once a year, at the approach of Christmas. Many people look upon it as quite a secondary art, but true lovers of books justly consider it to be a most important branch of bibliophily, which has had as yet but few, if any, historians. No indications as to the origin, the progress, the rise, or the decline of that art, so deserving of study, not only on its own account, but also by reason of the great masters it has produced, are to be found in those bibliographic works where one would chiefly expect to find them. A Frenchman, M. de Gauffremont, wrote some two centuries ago a *Treatise on the Art of Binding*, and a M. Jauglon, a fellow-countryman of his, attempted a few years later to handle the same subject; there was also a *Booke of Counsellles to Bookebinders* published in London by one James Eddowes in 1643. But all these works, together with a few

others by authors unknown, were simply books of technical advice or criticism; they did not profess to deal with the historical side of the art, and such copies of them as were circulated have now become so rare, that not even the best of national libraries, in England or on the Continent, are to be found provided with them. We have thought, therefore, that it might prove interesting to hear a few details, not upon the manner and fashion of binding books, but upon the various phases of success or failure, progress or retrogression, through which the art has had to pass.

Amongst the ancients (whose manuscripts were not of paper) binding did not exist. It is easy to understand this by recollecting the usages of the times. When men wrote upon the skin of fishes, upon linen, upon leaves, upon the bark of trees, upon ivory, upon stone, and upon metals, it was both useless and impossible to bind. The most that could be done was to collect some of the pieces of bark or fish-skin together, and to string them by files after cutting them of a size. But even this was rarely done, and the bookshelves of an Assyrian, an Egyptian, or an early Greek scholar must have been a scene of confusion indeed. At the time when Pharaoh, and afterwards Cheops, distributed stripes with an unsparring hand to the children of Israel, it had already become the fashion in Egypt to write upon thin planks of wood. By writing we mean here, of course, those strange hieroglyphics of birds, sphinxes, and other monstrosities which it has taken Europe some three thousand years to decipher. Writing as we understand it now was not known then, and as the painting of birds, winged beasts, and men with hawks' heads demanded a great deal of time and pains, literary matter was both rare and costly; rich men alone could pretend to a collection of poems, and books of divination; a thousand planks, of a foot square each, containing the substance of perhaps a dozen modern octavos, was considered a right princely library, and it would have been thought as bad as hiding a light under a bushel to have concealed any of these treasures from view by an attempt at binding. On the contrary, the custom was to bore a hole through the painted planks, and to hang them up by strips of leather in conspicuous places about the house. When any one wished to read he unhooked one of the planks, as people now-a-days do the bill of fare in a club dining-room, and as soon as he had had enough of it he put the thing back, and passed on to another plank.

The Chinese were undoubtedly the first nation to fabricate paper, and hence must have been also the first people to practise bookbinding. At what precise date paper was first made in China it is not very easy to determine, but a material very much resembling our straw paper, although yellower in colour and more flimsy to the touch, seems to have been in use before the Christian era. European travellers, D'Umont d'Urville amongst the number, bear witness to having

seen amongst the family treasures of wealthy mandarins books that had been handed down from father to son during centuries, and nothing in these works afforded any semblance that they had been amongst the first books ever published in the land. Some of them were thinly bound in plaited rice-straw covered over with figured satin, but one or two were bound in wood, painted, gilt, and enriched with carvings. Copies of the works of Lao-tsen, Meng-tsen, and Koug-tsen (Laotius, Mencius, and Confucius), evidently of great antiquity, were likewise found in the summer palace at Pekin a few years ago, and the binding in every case was such as to do honour to the artists, whoever they were, and whatever may have been the epoch of their existence.

But perhaps we shall do well to confine our notice of bookbinding to Europe, for, in the absence of any certain documents to record the march of civilisation in China and Japan, during the long period of time when these nations were unknown to the rest of the world, all statements concerning their inventive skill must be more or less hypothetical. When the history of the Celestial Empire becomes better known to us, as it no doubt will in a few years, we shall probably be surprised to find that the humblest of Chinese peasants were possessed of well-bound books at a time when our haughty mediæval barons were unable to sign their names. As it is, we can state, upon the testimony of well-nigh all the authors who have written upon China, that there are three volumes that have been favoured by succeeding generations of Chinese boys and girls from time out of date; three books of which every Chinese palace and cottage has owned a copy (and probably a bound copy) since four hundred years and more; and these are San Koué-tchi (History of the three Kingdoms), a work dear to soldiers as well as schoolboys from the tales of war and strife therein; Fa-youen-thou-tin (The Forest of Pearls of the Garden of the Law); and Si-Siang-ki (History of the Eastern Bower), the pet tale of Chinese young ladies.

At Athens, in the time of Pericles, it was customary to write either upon thin sheets of ivory or upon tablets of wood spread over with wax. This latter, as the most economical, was naturally the most prevalent method. Authors, philosophers, wits, and scholars, walked about with their ivory or wooden tablets under their tunics, and whenever they desired to note down anything, they did so by means of a pointed styllet made of gold, silver, or steel. It was the melting and soiling properties of the wax that led to the first European attempts at binding. The young gentlemen who attended the "At homes" of Aspasia, were too particular to suffer stains of grease upon the spotless folds of their garments, and the idea occurred to them of enclosing their waxen tablets between two slender sheets of ivory, gold, or silver. The fashion "took;" it was found that the two plates of metal not only preserved the wax from the heat, but also kept

the letters traced upon it from being obliterated by the air or the dust. Gradually, all authors fell into the habit of writing their treatises or plays upon wax tablets of an equal size, and then, pressing all the tablets together between two sheets of wood or metal; so that, seen from a distance, an Athenian work of four hundred or three hundred B.C., must have looked pretty much like a book upon a modern drawing-room table.

However, the reign of wax as a material to write on did not last long. The Romans inaugurated the use of parchment, which gave an immense stimulus to scribbling, for parchment was considerably cheaper than wax, and much easier to carry. But the introduction of parchment gave a blow to bookbinding. The Romans, although they sometimes made up their manuscripts into "*libri plicatiles*"—that is, small tomes of the size of three or four inches square, preferred rolling their parchments round a wooden cylinder. Hence the word volume, from *volvere*, a word which is absurd in the way we apply it now.

Owing to the habit of using volumes, the art of binding books made little or no progress so long as the Romans ruled the world. And after their sceptre had been broken, Europe was too much occupied in fighting to think, during many centuries, of anything like science, art, or literature. A few monks, scattered here and there in remote convents, were the only people who wrote through all those troublous times, and it was not until the beginning of the eighth century that the clergy, having become powerful and respected, began to spread works of history, theology, and even of chivalry, throughout Europe. Books were, however, wofully costly at that period. The copying of a single volume in plain writing, without ornament of any kind, would of itself have required a labour of many months, but plain books would not have suited the taste of the ignorant nobles of that time. Being for the most part unable to read, what they looked for in a book was a collection of gorgeously illumined pages, and, above all, a sumptuous binding. So long as these were forthcoming, they would gladly have said of the rest that it was perfectly indifferent to them whether there were any writing or not; and it is thus that towards the time of Charlemagne (who himself, by the way, notwithstanding all his wisdom, could not read), the illumining and binding of books attained a degree of richness, which would surprise us even now. There exists in the Bibliothèque Impériale, at Paris, the prayer-book which Charlemagne gave to the city of Toulouse, and which that town presented to Napoleon I. when he stopped there on his way to Spain. It is marvellously illumined, the pages are of purple parchment lettered with gold, and the binding is of scarlet velvet, in a perfect state of preservation.

As chivalry and knightly tastes continued to spread, the love of handsome books increased, until at last the supply, unable to keep pace

with the demand, was quite inadequate to meet the requirements of the wealthy nobles. Monasteries were then the great storehouses of book-writing, copying, making, and binding. Certain monks, whose names have perished, spent all their lives over the illuminating and binding of books; never leaving their cells except to pray, and never receiving a farthing for their labours, notwithstanding that their works were sold at a fabulous price for the benefit of greedy priors or rapacious bishops. When the crusades began, a few knights devoured by the thirst for tales of battle, learned to read; and fair ladies, finding the time long whilst their lords were away, did the same. By the end of the thirteenth century there were between fifteen hundred and two thousand monks in England alone, whose sole occupation was making books; and paper having been invented about that time, the publication of religious works was commenced under a cheaper form for the benefit of the middle classes, who were then very much better taught than the aristocracy.

The mania for splendid books of chivalry reached its climax under the reigns of Edward the Third and his immediate successors, when Froissart sojourned at the English court in company with Chaucer, the father of English poetry. One might almost be taxed with exaggeration were one to attempt to describe the treasures of art and wealth that were freely lavished upon the binding and illuminating of a book in those days. A few prices will barely convey an idea of this bibliomaniac extravagance.

A copy of the *Roman de la Rose*, by Guillaume de Lorris, given by the Duke of Hereford (afterwards Henry the Fourth) to Mary Bohun, his wife, cost four hundred crowns of gold, something equivalent to seven hundred pounds of our money. The Prayer-book given in 1412 by Charles the Sixth of France to the Duchess of Burgundy, cost six hundred crowns of gold, and the Viscounty of Bayeux was specially taxed to pay for it. In 1430, at the coronation of Henry the Sixth of England as King of France, at Notre Dame, the regent Bedford was presented with three works of chivalry, and the young monarch with five, by a deputation of the citizens of Paris. The eight volumes together were valued at two thousand four hundred crowns; and it may be instructive to add that his Grace of Bedford, being subsequently in need of cash, disposed of them all for about a third of that sum. A scroll of music, purchased in 1441 for the abbey church of St. Stephen's, at Caen, necessitated an outlay of twenty-two sols (or silver pence), "the value of ten bushels of wheat."

And, as a final instance, the Bishop of Poitiers, Simon de Gramand, having presented a Latin and French dictionary, in two volumes, in the year 1426, to the Jacobine monastery of the town, it was resolved, in a council of the order, "that as a token of kindness for so munificent a gift prayers should be recited for him

daily 'ad perpetuitatem,' and that after his death, masses for the sanctification of his soul should be offered up on the first Sunday of each month, in the chapel of the convent."

One might be tempted to suppose that, under the circumstances, the bookseller's bill, which even in these times plays a very conspicuous part in a schoolboy's expenses, must have been the terror and despair of mediæval parents. But such was not the case.

To begin with, boys went much later to school than they do now. Twelve was the usual age for commencing lessons, and as soon as a student had learnt to write, he was taught to make his own books. A Greek or Latin work was chained to a lectern in the middle of the schoolroom, the master gave out the passage that was to be learned by heart or construed, and the pupils came up turn by turn, or three or four at a time, and copied it out on their paper. It was only very wealthy scholars who could afford to have a complete set of books of their own, and the first head-master of Eton (the school was founded in 1441) had probably little more than six or eight volumes in his library.

We come now to the invention of printing, which marks a complete revolution in the social history of the world. It is well known that Fust, who established the first presses invented by Gutenberg, kept the discovery for some years secret, and gained an immense deal of money by selling the earliest printed books as manuscripts. When, however, the secret at last transpired, the price of printed volumes rose instead of falling, and for a long while the works printed at Nuremberg and Mayence fetched enormous sums. With the invention of printing, on the other hand, the fashion for costly bindings and illuminated pages disappeared almost entirely. People began to care more for the inside than the outside of books. A few monks continued to adorn missals and bibles for kings or princes; but the art of binding may be said to have fallen into a complete state of stagnation for the next hundred years.

It was not until the middle of the sixteenth century, at the period known as the "Revival," that printed books having become more common, and consequently cheaper, the taste for handsome bindings set in once more. The richest library in Europe during the fifteenth century had been undoubtedly that formed at Buda by Mathias Corvin, King of Hungary. It numbered fifty thousand volumes (the greater part of which are now in the public library at Munich), and the bindings alone must have cost the worth of several hundred thousands of pounds of our money. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, private persons, noblemen, and wealthy merchants began to surpass monarchs in the splendour of their libraries. The most esteemed bookbinders of Europe had originally been Italians. Under the revival the palm passed to France, and the encouragement given to artists by the House of Valois produced such masters as Enguerraud, Boyer, Deuennille, Pas-

deloup, Derôme, Chameau, and others, whose marvellous bindings in ivory, gold, or figured leather, held a place beside the master-works of Benvenuto Cellini, Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Bernard Palissy.

England produced nothing very remarkable in the way of book-binding during either the sixteenth, seventeenth, or eighteenth centuries. Both under the reign of Louis the Fourteenth and under that of Louis the Fifteenth the French continued to hold the first place; and Boyet, Ponchartrain, Simier, Purgold, Vaugelles, and Bauzerian, all binders of the last century, were universally held to be incomparable. But already the spread of literature, under the influence of the great philosophical school, had prepared the decline and fall of the bookbinder's art. The more men read, the less can they afford to pay for their books. During the eighteenth century the English and French saw great authors succeed each other in such rapid succession, that it was all the public could do to keep step with them. To print quickly and cheaply became the aim and object of booksellers. No matter what the binding looked like, so long as the matter in it was good. Gradually the bookshelves of libraries became stocked with plain unseemly volumes, all bound uniformly in brown calfskin. A handsome volume came to be a rarity, and when the nineteenth century dawned it would have been difficult to find anything like a thoroughly beautiful book in any librarian's shop in Europe. We all remember those deplorable folios and those unrepresentable quartos out of which our grandfathers read. Could anything be less worthy of the noble authors they covered than those dingy bindings, which reminded one of untanned shoe leather? And when, some fifty years ago, the fashion became prevalent of giving prize books to deserving youths, could anything have been more pitiful than the tawdry volumes with which they were afflicted for their merits?

For, of late years, notwithstanding the rabid demand for cheap editions, badly printed upon worthless paper, and ignobly bound, bookbinding has become an art again. The magnificent books published daily by certain great London houses are superior in point of printing, and equal in point of binding, to anything that the middle ages ever produced. And it may be looked upon as a set-off to our national inferiority in this respect during preceding centuries to know that, now-a-days, books bound and printed in England are held to be better than any published on the Continent. It is true that at the International Exhibition of 1867 it was a Toulouse firm that carried off the prize for printing and binding; but we must not forget that, in the first place, the majority of the jury were Frenchmen, and that in the second, the winners were awarded the prize for altogether exceptional editions, known as "éditions de luxe," made entirely with a view to the prize, and never intended to be offered permanently

for sale at the advertised prices. The English houses, on the contrary, exhibited none but true competition works, saleable to the public at the specified charges, and not at all "got up" for the occasion. As a general rule French printing is slovenly and French binding careless. And with regard to the illustration of books, Paris has nothing to show us that can in any way be compared with our London works illustrated by John Gilbert, Birket Foster, and others of equal fame. We make an exception in the case of Gustave Doré's works however.

A word now in conclusion. It is not so unimportant as certain people may think, whether a good book should be poorly or sumptuously bound. If we admit the refining and ennobling tendencies of art upon the human mind, we must allow that art should as much as possible have a hand in everything; that it should be asked to aid in all the handicraft of man; and that all our works, whatever they be, should more or less bear its impress. All that strikes the eye as being fair, imaginative, and of harmonious proportions, is good; good because it causes a pleasing impression on the senses, and good because it gives evidence of careful painstaking work: that is, of industry and diligence, the best proofs of civilisation. By all means, then, let us have good bindings to good books, and let us encourage those who would give them us. Gorgeous volumes are not within the means of every one; but we can most of us select good editions of moderate price in preference to bad ones. And those amongst us who are rich can, by well-timed and sensible liberality, make it worth the while of intelligent publishers to sell us handsome books, well printed, well illustrated, and well bound.

COMPANY MANNERS.

ALMOST all of us know what it is to have best things. In dress, furniture, rooms, and personal belongings generally, there are almost always an upper and an under crust, and a division into two classes—one for show, and the other for use. But it is not merely our persons and our rooms that we put into company dress for high days and holidays; we put our minds, our tempers, and our manners as well. Only the most marvellously amiable people have no company tempers at all, but are as sweet and placid on work-a-days as on Sundays; and only the very highest state of artificial good breeding, combined with this natural perfection of temper, makes us uniformly courteous to every one, irrespective of station or of degrees of intimacy.

Nothing is more rare than this unvarying good breeding; for just as fine ladies wear their court plumes only on court days, and as queens lay aside their crowns and go about in caps and bonnets like ordinary folk, so the gala dress of minds and manners, which is adopted for society, is dropped for the slipshod undress of home; and the people who have just now been

the very pink of politeness in a neighbour's drawing-room, become nothing better than boors at the family fireside, where there is no one to dazzle or to win.

The perfection of manner alone, even if it go no deeper than the outside, is a charm beyond that of mere beauty. The one is the result of education—that is, intellectual and spiritual; the other is only the raw material—a natural gift, not won but bestowed, and, though attracting personal love, reflecting no honour. What we mean by a thorough gentleman or a high-bred lady is one who has no veneer of company manners, but whose whole nature is so penetrated with the self-respect of courtesy, that nothing coarser can be shown under any provocation. This is an immense power in those who possess it. Nothing weakens a righteous cause so much as intemperate language in supporting it; and nothing tells more against a good principle than bad manners in those who uphold it. When men swear and fume, and use hard names, and make themselves generally disagreeable and insulting, it does not signify to the aggrieved in what cause or in whose service they are so comporting themselves. Human nature is but a weak vessel for holding justice at the best, and we may be sure that the natural inclination of most people would be against the cause advocated by such unpleasant adherents.

Speaking broadly, and from the widest standpoint of national characteristics, we would say that the Italians, of all European nations, have most of this solid courtesy throughout; not a stately, but a good-tempered courtesy—by no means chivalrous in the way of the stronger protecting the weaker, and for self-respect keeping watch and ward over the fiercer enemies within the soul, but rather deferential, as assuming that every one is better than themselves. When an Italian does give way to passion he is dangerous; but when in a good fair-sailing humour nothing can well exceed the almost feminine sweetness of his courteous demeanour. The French have a coarser core, that comes through the veneer on occasions when you touch their self-love or their jealousy; and the core of French discourtesy is very coarse indeed when really got at. We English have not a very fine veneer at any time, and the rougher grain below even that not over-polished surface rubs up without much trouble. But then we pride ourselves on this rough grain of ours, and think it a mark of honesty to let it ruffle up at the lightest touch. Indeed, we despise anything else, and have hard names for a courtesy that is even what the Americans call "clear grit" throughout; while as for that which is only veneer, stout or slender, there is no word of contempt too harsh for the expression of our opinion thereon.

We are so far right, in that company manners put on for show and not integral to the character, nor worn in daily life, are an abomination to souls understanding the beauty of

truth. But we need not be so frightfully severe against all kinds of surface smoothness as we are, and condemn the polish of material and the seeming of veneer as sins identical with each other. In this confusion of cases we are wholly wrong and unjustifiable; the one being a virtue attained only as an ultimate grace and by immense labour—the fruitage of a long and well cultivated garden; the other being just so much poonah-painting, or potichomania, or wax-fruit show—got at with no trouble at all—pretence and pretentiousness, and nothing more.

What can be more detestable than the things we see and hear at times from gentlefolks, whose gentleness is in name, and appearance, and style of living, and the banker's book, rather than in anything more substantial? Take the woman who rates her children and flouts her husband when they are alone, but who is all smiles and suavity to the people next door, whom she despises—the girls, who are snappish and peevish to each other, but who put on their sweetest graces for the benefit of young Corydon and his sisters, diligently ironing down those rugged seams of theirs while turning the smooth side outermost, that young Corydon may think the stuff all of a piece throughout, with no jagged joinings anywhere—papa, who comes home "as cross as the cats," as the Irish say, letting the home life go shabby and slipshod for want of a little of the courtesy he bestows so lavishly on his guests, not a man of whom he likes, nor a woman of whom he fancies—"the boys," who make their sisters feel the full weight of masculine insolence and neglect, while to their sisters' friends they are everything that is chivalrous and devoted, as "boys" should be—can anything be less of the substance of gentleness than these? And yet how often we meet with them in the world! Each of these represents a distinct section of the coarse core veneered—just so much plausible hypocrisy covering up an inner sin, as a silken coat hides ragged linen—just so much domestic misery that might be avoided if folks cared more for reality than for show, and thought the solid pudding of happiness better worth having than the frothed cream of praise. The fiddle is hung up behind the house door in too many homes, and suavity is laid aside with the dress suit. And yet it would seem by the merest common-sense calculation, that as home is the place where we live and where nine-tenths of our days are passed, none happiness and family peace are far in advance of any outside pleasures or barren social reputation, and should be the possessions we ought most to cultivate. But common-sense calculations have very little to do with the arrangement of our affairs. We lay aside our company manners with our company coats, and make ourselves what we call "comfortable" at home; that is, we give way to any natural peevishness of temper we may have, and suffer ourselves to go slipshod and unpleasant, both in mind and

body, for the benefit of those who are nearest and dearest to us.

The cause of this lies in the kind of home we of the middle classes make for ourselves; in the excessive exclusiveness and isolation which we think the only safe or decent mode of life; in the belief each man has that the four walls of his titular castle are built of better brick than any other man's four walls, and enclose pearls of price that would be spoilt if allowed to be set beside other pearls of as great price. No check of public opinion reaches the home circle of the middle classes, save on those rare holiday occasions which call forth company manners. Even a "lodger," though becoming by time part of the family, necessitates a little self-control, wanting in the ordinary conditions of a home life; for no one likes to show the worst of himself, or herself, to a person not connected with him, or her, by blood or marriage. To people who can take up their hats and umbrellas and walk out of the house at their own sweet wills we are considerate and courteous. We lavish on strangers and we starve our own.

There is no greater education into vulgarity than home carelessness. A man or woman brought up under such a system is ruined for all the reality of refinement in after years. The surliness too often allowed at home, where children are permitted to be snappish to each other, disobliging and discourteous, ruins the manners as much as it hurts the mind. Hence we come to company manners, to a sickly sweetness put on simply for the occasion, to a formality of speech and an oppressiveness of attentions, to an exaggerated politeness that is so terribly afraid of transgressing into liberties as to be absolute bondage, and to all the silly little affectations belonging to the condition.

We never know any one whom we have not lived with, and even then not always. To be admitted into the Temple does not include entrance into the adytum; and we may remain for weeks in a house where master and mistress and maids are all reticent alike, and may know nothing of the reality underlying the surface. People of whom I once knew something, and who were notoriously ill-matched but marvelously polite, could keep their house full of company, and yet allow none of their guests to find out that the husband and wife were not on speaking terms. All the communication between them, that was absolutely necessary, was carried on by writing. Personally, these two, dispensing smiles and civilities to all around, held no direct intercourse. Yet they managed so well that no one saw through the screen.

With company manners and company dress, there is also a company voice. Who does not know that false voice of society? Mincing or thrown boldly forward, flung into the chest or pitched up into the head, it is all the same—the company voice, accent, choice of words, and register—all artificial alike. And there are company gestures. People sit and stand and walk, and use their hands according to the different degrees of familiarity in which they

stand towards their society. There is a vast deal of company make-believe among us; and if we would only give half the time we now bestow on "looking pretty" and "behaving pretty" in society, to being sweet tempered, and amiable, and careful of pleasing, at home, it would be all the better for ourselves and our families, and a gain in the way of true civilisation.

OLD NEWSPAPERS.

IN the year 1679, some truth-loving persons set up a certain news-sheet entitled *Mercurius Domesticus*, published to prevent false reports; and for some time it was in high favour, as it published many strange and startling facts for the pleasure of contradicting them. This, however, was only one of many *Mercuries*—the first English newspaper having borne the name of *Mercury*. It was dated 1588, and a copy still exists in the British Museum. It is from these old *Gazettes* and *Mercuries* that we cull at random a few advertisements. There are many inquiries after run-away slaves: as "Lost, near Stocks Market, a negro boy called Kent, aged ten. His hair cut short round the crown of his head, with silver rings in his ears, and a russet cloth coat edged with blue, and cap of the same, belonging to Mr. Julius Deeds. Whoever shall bring the same shall have a guinea reward." The date is 1691. We often meet with advertisements conveying the information that at certain particular times and places a post will be established for the purpose of carrying letters; for instance, "These are to give notice, that, during his majesty's being at Windsor, there will go a post thither every evening from the General Post-office in Lombard-street, July, 1678." Travellers, to whom speed is an object, are informed that "A flying waggon from Bath to London in three days begins on April 7, 1729, and sets out from the market-place in Bath, and comes to the White Swan, Holborn Bridge, on Wednesday, and returns every Thursday to the said Unicorn in Bath. Passengers to pay ten shillings each, and a penny a pound for their goods. Performed by me, if God permit, Nicholas Peare."

What will the tea drinkers of the present day think of the following scrap of useful information: "That excellent, and by all physicians approved, China drink, called by the Cheneans *teha*, and by other nations *tay* or *tee*, is sold at the Sultanness Head, by the Royal Exchange, London." This appears in a number of the *Commonwealth Mercury* for 1658, which also contains a doleful account of the death of "His most renowned Highness Oliver Lord Protector," and of the installation of his son, with the proclamation and the account of the rapture of the people, who did eagerly cry, "God save his Highness Richard Lord Protector!" In the same number we find the following characteristic announcement: "There is newly published A few Sighs from Hell; a

good warning to sinners, old and young, by that poor servant of the Lord, John Bunyan." Of the same author we also read: "Mr. John Bunyan, author of the Pilgrim's Progress, and many other excellent books that have found great acceptance, hath left behind him several MSS. His widow is desired to print them; they will make a book of ten shillings. All persons who desire so great and good a work will send in five shillings for their own payment to Dorman Newman. 1690." Of another person, whose name is famous in literature, we hear, "The gentleman who was so severely ridiculed for bad horsemanship as Johnny Gilpin, died at Bath leaving twenty thousand pounds. 1790." In May, 1763, we read: "The creditors of the late William Shenstone, Esq., of the Seasowes, are desired to send an account of their debts and accounts in order to have them discharged." In 1751 we read: "The house and gardens of Edward Gibbon, Esq., at Putney, to be let for any number of years."

In December, 1680, a wonderful bargain is advertised thus: "These are to give notice to persons of quality, that a small parcel of most excellent tea is by accident fallen into the hands of a private person to be sold; but that all may not be disappointed, the lowest price is thirty shillings a pound, and not any to be sold under a pound weight, for which they are desired to bring a convenient box."

There is a curious notice "to all gentlemen and others of the surname of Abraham, who are desired to meet at the Pump, in Wallbrook, on Wednesday, there they will meet others of the same name who are desirous of forming a pleasant club. 1705."

Even matrimonial advertisements sometimes find their way into these old papers. Thus: "To Gentlemen of Fortune.—A most advantageous opportunity now offers to any young gentlemen of quality and independent fortune. The advertiser now offers to introduce such to an accomplished young lady of fortune and greater expectancy. None but a real gentleman will succeed. 1771."

Here is another: "A middle-sized, genteel gentleman, supposed to be of the age of twenty-five or thereabouts, of a handsome, cheerful countenance, a widish mouth with very fine teeth, looked like a clergyman, and was chiefly in company with a very young officer at Ranelagh on Friday. If the said gentleman is really of the Church of England, and is a single man, and has no objection to an agreeable companion for life, of a pious and virtuous disposition, not much turned of thirty, and who is in possession of a very handsome jointure, by directing a line to M. A., at Jack's Coffee House, may hear of further particulars. 1759."

In a copy of the Times for October, 1798, we find some interesting paragraphs. The news of the day were Nelson's glorious victory and the Irish rebellion; and the two small sheets are principally filled up with these important subjects. We read, that "immediately that the news of the gallant victory obtained by Admiral

Nelson was known at Lloyd's, a subscription was opened for the relief of the widows and orphans of the brave who died there for their country's glory." Another paragraph tells us: "Among the wonders of the present day, Mrs. Siddons' late achievements at Bath, Brighton, and London should not be forgotten. She positively performed at each of these places within the incredibly short space of ninety-six hours." The coarse paper, bad type, and small size of this paper would ill please the Times readers of the present day.

It is even more interesting to read the longer paragraphs, and, comparing them with the leaders and well-written articles in some of our modern newspapers, to note the march of intellect. We have reason to be thankful that we live, not in days when our ideas of the outer world, as derived from newspapers, were confused by accounts of "mowing devils," "possessed maidens," "three suns," "headless men," and "double children," but in times when special correspondents from all parts of the world supply us with word pictures and eloquent histories of great events.

THE ABBOT'S POOL.

IN SIX CHAPTERS. CHAPTER III.

Why any secret? I love not secrets.

THE honeymoon was over, the ordeal of wedding visits gone through, and the doctor and his wife settled down into home life. Philip Denbigh had well said that Elsie was the only woman in the world for him; and every hour of close wedded union deepened his passionate affection for her. His nature, reserved and intense in everything, was one which peculiarly needed to repose on "the soft pillow of a woman's mind;" and though not by any means his equal in intellect, she very soon learned to enter into many of the subjects that interested him, and to like them for their own sake as well as for his. And yet, while every hour gave her fresh proofs of his devotion to her, while she saw that his fond looks followed her whenever they were in company together, and that her soft voice was always heard by him in ever so large a party, Elsie had arrived, within the first year of their marriage, at the conclusion that, for some reason beyond her ken, her husband was not happy, and, moreover, that he did not fully trust her. He was unaccountably anxious to study the address of every letter she received, and he had a habit of cross-examining her minutely, and with a restless eagerness which he tried in vain to conceal, as to whom she had seen and what she had done during his absence; it often happened that he would recur to the subject long after she had finished her simple history, turning on her with sudden sharp questioning, as if he suspected her of trying to conceal or falsify something. More than once some chance inaccuracy in her statement had worked him up into just such an un-

reasonable storm as she had seen on the day when she found the ring; but he was always so sorry afterwards, and so grieved to have grieved her, that she learned to dread these scenes far more on his account than for the passing pain they caused herself.

At first she always considered that she was to blame when he fell into these strange fits of temper; but she was soon half vexed, half comforted, to find that his captious and suspicious ways were discussed with lively interest in the kitchen.

"I don't know what ever have a come to 'un. It's enough to drive a body mazed," old Isott declared, with free spoken wrath. "He 've as good as told I a score o' times this year as I were a trying for to deceive 'un. I tell 'un I never did tell lies when I were young, and 'tain't likely as I'd begin now as I'll so soon have to gie an account. Master baint half the gentleman as he used to be, and I don't care who hears me say so."

But in spite of these growls, Isott vigorously snubbed her underlings if they ventured to make any remarks to the same effect in her presence.

One hot August afternoon, when the earth seemed to lie baking and panting under the fierce heat of the sun, Mr. Denbigh was walking, with rapid strides, across the field at the back of his house. It was a short cut from some parts of the village, but of late he had seldom used it. On this occasion he crossed the grass almost at a run, vaulted over the low gate which led into the garden, and was soon at the drawing-room window. The outside blinds were down, and the room looked cool and pleasant in their green shade; the perfume of jasmine and roses and lemon-scented verbena, breathed from the flower vases; and Elsie, in her white summer dress, was seated at the open window. She began an exclamation at her husband's worn fagged looks, but he interrupted her:

"I can't stop. I only came to tell you that I was right in what I feared this morning. Those Bailey children have scarlet fever, undoubtedly, in its worst form. That poor little boy is dead already, and the four others are down. Fools that they are! Never calling one in till it is too late."

"Oh, how sorry I am!"

"Yes, I don't see what chance any of them have in that close nest of cottages; it must spread like wildfire. And it has been for a week in the workhouse wards at Slowcombe."

"Will that give you more work?"

"Of course; I have sent for help from Brixham, but, till it comes, I must do all the work, so don't wait dinner for me."

"But can't you come in and take a mutton chop? No? Well, some cold meat? A glass of wine, at least?" said Elsie, diminishing her offers as he shook his head at every suggestion.

"I shall do very well; only, love, don't expect me till you see me, and, above all, don't sit up."

"But can I do nothing to help these poor people? Do they want nothing?"

"Nothing? Everything! Go to Mrs. Carter, dearest, and see what woman's wit can devise to help the sick, and, above all, to feed up and care for those who are still well; prevention is better than cure. Only, whatever happens, I won't have you run into the slightest danger, mind that."

Then followed two months, during which Mrs. Denbigh scarcely saw her husband, though she heard of him from many people, and never without praise and blessing. It was a sharp conflict that he waged with the plague fiend, and he brought to the service all the power of science and skill assisted by the thoroughness which was his great characteristic. Though he seemed to have more on his hands than any human being could accomplish, no one was neglected, no blunders were made, nobody could complain of forgetfulness, or undue hurry on the doctor's part, and many were dragged back from the very brink of the grave. He really seemed to live without eating or sleeping; and, even when assistance came from elsewhere, he only entered his own house for a hurried meal, a cold bath, an hour's sleep, and, above all, the word and kiss to his wife, which, as he truly told her, were more to him than sleep.

With the freshening days of October, the fever abated, the fresh cases became fewer every day, and many of the sick began to recover. The vicar's wife, who had been managing a dispensary, while Mrs. Denbigh had undertaken certain arrangements for feeding some of those yet unstricken, reported that they had better join forces, most of the convalescents having reached a stage to require kitchen physic. And at last there came an evening when Mr. Denbigh entered his house as it was growing dusk, and announced to his delighted wife, that, unless specially summoned, he should not go out again that night.

"Never mind about dinner, Elsie," he said; "if you have dined, tea will be much more to the purpose." And he passed on to his dressing-room. When he entered the sitting-room again, it was glowing with the brightness of fire and candle; the chintz curtains were drawn to exclude the dreary wet daylight; the armchair was drawn temptingly near the fire; and the choice white tea-service, which Elsie only used on rare occasions, sent out its fragrance from its own particular little table. Elsie herself knelt on the hearth, the firelight glancing on her shining hair and the few bright ornaments on her dark dress, as she coaxed the kettle into boiling. It was a picture of home comfort, and Philip Denbigh seemed for once to give himself up entirely to the enjoyment of the moment, as he sank back into the depths of his armchair to his well-earned repose.

"Thank you," he roused himself to say, as his wife arranged a tempting little meal at his elbow on another small table; "I ought to be waiting on you, my love, not you on me; but somehow I am strangely tired."

"No wonder; but you are only tired, not ill, are you?" she asked, with sudden alarm. "O, Philip, how hot your head is!"

She noticed, too, that he only played with the food which Isott had carefully prepared, and at length he owned that it was of no use to try to eat it.

"But don't look so scared, Elsie," he said, smiling. "My hour has not struck yet."

"I can't get out of the trick of feeling anxious," she returned; "though it is very faithless of me, when you have so many prayers to guard you. If you could hear, Philip, how these poor mothers speak of you! They are so grateful!"

"Grateful? God help them, poor wretches! they've little enough to be grateful to me for," said Mr. Denbigh, heavily. "How many of them find life so pleasant, do you think, that they need be very overpowering in their thankfulness?"

"Most of them; nearly all, I am sure. The poorest of them have something to love, and, therefore, something to live for. Surely, Philip, you and I, of all people, should never talk as if life were not worth having."

"May be so; but for my part, with every case I brought round, I wondered if the child—they were most of them children, you know—wouldn't live to curse me for not letting it die."

"Oh! Of a child one may sometimes feel that, but it is a faithless feeling still, is it not? God, who has allowed you to save them, has surely done so for some good wise purpose, and for their own happiness."

"It is all a lottery," said Mr. Denbigh, gloomily; "the circumstances make the saint or the sinner. Do you suppose that Cain or Judas, or any others whose names are a by-word for all that is bad, were really one whit worse than dozens and hundreds of respectable folks, who have lived respected, and had all the shops shut on their funeral day? Not they. It all depends on the amount of temptation that is thrown in a man's way, whether he stands or falls."

"But surely," said Elsie, rather bewildered, "it is not as if we were at the mercy of chance; surely God sends all our trials according to what He knows to be best for us?"

"Yes, that is the correct theory, I know, and certainly a comfortable one, doing away with any semblance of human responsibility. If omnipotence and omniscience arrange all the scenes of the play, well and good. Man is only a puppet in their hands; let them look to it."

He spoke bitterly and incoherently, and Elsie was silent a moment, shocked at his expressions.

"I do not know you to-night, Philip," she then said, looking anxiously in his face; "you are tired out. Won't you go to bed? Think how long it is since you have had a night's unbroken rest. You will take a more hopeful view of life and of your fellow-creatures, to-morrow, I am sure."

"It is longer still since I have heard you sing," he answered. "Have not you a book of solemn old chants somewhere? I am not in tune for anything else to-night."

She searched among her music, and presently her sweet low voice began to chant the Dies Irae, with a mournful pathetic expression, which peculiarly suited the grand old melody and the touching words, in which faith and hope are struggling with something akin to despair. Her husband leaned his head on his hand, as he listened intently to the passionate pleading of every solemn verse.

Seeking me Thy worn feet hasted,
On the cross Thy soul death tasted;
Let not all those toils be wasted!

sang Elsie, and, as the last notes died away, he rose abruptly, saying,

"I am tired out, Elsie, and my head aches. I will go to bed."

His wife soon followed him, but before midnight she was at Isott's door with a frightened summons. He had awakened from a short sleep to find the pain in his head violently increased, and was in a state of so much fever, that Mrs. Denbigh was dreadfully frightened. He was quite conscious, however, and would not hear of her sending for Mr. Scott; indeed she had not confidence enough in Mr. Scott's skill to care to press the matter; and she was presently comforted by Isott's pronouncing that he was merely over-tired, and recommending that universal panacea, a cup of tea. It did him good, for he fell into a sleep. It was so uneasy a one, however, that Mrs. Denbigh would not risk disturbing him by lying down again herself, but joined the old servant, who sat keeping watch over the teapot by the fire in the dressing-room.

"He seems to be dreaming very miserably, and he is so feverish," she whispered. "Do you really think it is not going to be anything bad?"

"Lor bless ye, no," said Isott, reassuringly; "he be just a downright tired out, that's what he be. To my mind, he han't been really like hisself this ever so long."

"I have sometimes thought that too," said Elsie, too frightened not to speak plainly to this tried old friend of her husband's. "I have fancied him out of spirits, oh! this long time." And she glanced through the open door at the bed where he lay, his countenance looking most careworn and haggard in his uneasy sleep.

"My dear," said Isott, in a mysterious whisper, "he do love ye better 'n anything as ever he've a got; whatever be a troubling of him, it baint nothing as you've got a call to be jealous of; you be sure of that."

"Oh, surely yes," Elsie said, smiling at the preposterous idea that she could be jealous.

"Well, then," the old woman went on, "supposin' he've a got some secret as he do keep from ye, it baint nothing of that sort, and may be, if he'd take courage, and up and tell ye, he'd be a deal easier once 'twas over."

Mrs. Denbigh felt and looked surprised, but did not know what to say, and Isott went on rapidly: "I be a foolish old 'oman like enough, but sure I am he han't never been the same since that there strange gentleman came here the night afore you and he was married. What! he never told ye, eh?" she added, quickly, seeing her mistress's bewildered looks.

"I do not think he ever did," said Mrs. Denbigh, collecting all her soft dignity, "so, Isott, don't you tell me either, for I should not like to hear it at all, unless I hear it from him."

"Lor' bless ye, Mrs. Denbigh, I han't a got nothing to tell ye. 'Twas only as I were up late, over in my cottage there, ironing out Jonathan's shirt, and I see'd a light in the surgery parlour, and I looked across and see'd he and a strange man a standing between the light and the window talking. There, my dear, that be all I do assure ye."

"Well, that is not much certainly. What makes you tell me of it? I don't understand."

"Strangers be scarce in Sedgbrook," said Isott, bluntly "and strangers like that too, with a lot of nasty hair stuff all about his mouth, and chin, and the hair o' his head Lord knows how long, and his face all one as the colour of that there brown table-cover. Not as I saw much of 'un, 'twere master as I did look at, and as sure as you're alive, my dear, he'd brought him some bad news or other; for master'd got a look on his face as I never seed there afore—though many and many's the time I've seen it there since."

Mrs. Denbigh felt uncomfortable. Still she felt that to discuss Philip's affairs with a servant, even so old and tried a servant as Isott, was not seemly, and, rather reproaching herself for having listened so far, she began,

"Well, Isott, when Mr. Denbigh is well, I will ask him about it, you may be sure."

"Do ye, my dear, do ye," said Isott, interrupting her eagerly. "Now that be the very reason why I've a telled ye all this. Suppose master have a got into debts with this here new furnishing, or suppose there be any trouble as he've a got into afore he was a courting of you. Lord bless ye, young men will be young men! Why, it's only natural as he shouldn't like to tell ye, and nothing 'll ever put it out of my mind as that there queer, furrin looking chap were either a bullying him for money, or trying for to break off his marriage w' you, or sum'at o' that. So now, my dear, do ye try and make 'un tell ye about it; for 'tis a nasty tiresome feel for a man to have sum'at as he's bound to keep from his missus. Hark! He be a waking."

He had indeed awakened with a great start, and Elsie, going softly to his side, found him sitting up in bed, and could hear him repeating under his breath, very rapidly, the words: "Fear not them that kill the body—that kill the body—but fear Him that can cast both body and soul into hell."

She was overpowered with horror and alarm; but, in another moment, he came to himself, and said in his natural voice, as he sank back

on the pillow: "Elsie, how come you to be up at this hour?"

"You have not been well," she answered, keeping her voice steady by an effort; but, dimly as the night light was burning, her white looks did not escape his notice, and the next question was in the sharp anxious voice which she knew so well.

"What have I been saying to make you look like that?"

"Nothing, dearest. I think some texts from the Bible were running in your head, nothing more."

"Nothing more, really?" He held her hand tightly across his burning forehead, while he seemed to collect his thoughts. "Elsie," he resumed, in a calmer tone, "listen to me. I believe this headache and feverishness are nothing but the effect of work and worry; still, it may be the fever. If it should be, you must make me one promise. Let Isott nurse me, and let no one else enter the room, and don't come near me yourself. Promise!"

"I cannot, indeed. How can you ask me?" she cried, much hurt. "Would not you despise any wife who could make or keep such a promise?"

"Promise!" he repeated. "Elsie, you are driving me into a fever; you are driving me mad by refusing; you don't know what you do. Promise!"

With a firm conviction that he was already delirious, she gave the required promise, trusting that she was not very wicked in doing so, without meaning to keep it.

"But I hope you will be better to-morrow," she said, as cheerfully as she could. "Isott thinks you are only knocked up by all you have lately done."

"It is my own belief," he said, and still holding her hand clasped in his, he soon fell into another sleep: a less uneasy one this time, though still he moaned and muttered. And at every startled waking, came the question:

"What have I been saying?"

Towards morning he grew quieter, and Elsie noticed, thankfully, that his forehead and hands were cooler, and his face more like itself. She stole to the window, and stepped behind the curtain to look at the dawn, which was beginning to break; and as she leaned her head against the glass, her thoughts were busy with Isott's suggestion. It comforted her to think that some old debt or boyish scrape was at the bottom of her husband's strange words and ways. That, she thought, would account for everything. His uneven spirits, his suspicious temper, his jealous dread of what she might hear or see, would all be quite natural if he were keeping some secret from her. Her eyes filled with happy hopeful tears, as she pictured herself winning from him his full confidence, and giving him in return the heart-felt assurance, that no extravagance, or folly, or boyish error could in the least diminish her love, or lessen her respect, for him.

"When he is well," she thought, "I will ask

him what he has on his mind, and if he will but tell me, all will be well."

So mused Elsie Denbigh, while her husband within the room tossed and muttered in his feverish sleep; and without the room, the reddening sky was reflected in the black waters of the Abbot's Pool.

CHAPTER IV.

Dear my Lord,

Make me acquainted with your cause of grief.

SHAKESPEARE.

MR. DENBIGH'S illness proved not to be serious. A few days of entire rest conquered it. Elsie had by no means forgotten the resolution which had grown out of her talk with Isott, but it was not easy to find an opportunity of carrying it into effect. Again and again she began little remarks intended to lead up to the great question: "Have you anything on your mind?" And again and again she had not courage to come to the point.

One evening, as they sat together, he suddenly asked her if she had ever read Southey's *All for Love*, and insisted on reading it through to her. When he had finished he asked her what she thought of it?

"It is very beautiful," she said; "only I don't feel as if it were natural."

"What! You think the devil no longer goeth about, seeking whom he may devour?"

"I did not mean that. I meant that I do not think Cyra's married life could have been so happy and peaceful with that dreadful man for her husband."

"Indeed? Not when

He loved her as sincerely,
Most wretched and unhappy man,
As he had bought her dearly.

Did not that deserve some little return, however bad he might be?"

"I did not say she could not love him. But the more she cared for him, the more she would feel the gulf between them, I think. Oh! it is a wretched heart-breaking story; how glad I am it never really happened."

"Yes; that is a comfort certainly," he said; and there was a pause, which she broke by saying,

"If there had been nothing else to make the heroine of this poem unhappy, she must have seen that there was an atmosphere about her husband which she could not understand; a something hidden from her. Can anything be more wretched than that?"

She stopped, and, finding herself on the brink of her great subject, blushed so guiltily that her husband asked, in his sudden suspicious way:

"What are you thinking about?"

She left her place, and came to kneel beside him. She put her arms round his neck, and laid her head on his breast, bending down so that he could not see her face. "I am thinking," she said, with a fast-beating heart, "that I should be so grieved if you ever kept anything

from me, anything that was perplexing you, or troubling you! Whatever it was, I would so much rather know it, and help you to bear it."

She ended her little speech, rather surprised that he had not interrupted her; he did not even answer or move until she looked up, afraid that she had vexed him. But there was no anger in his face; there was only a grave and troubled look; and all he said was: "What fancies have you got in your head, Elsie?"

"I have thought sometimes, when I have seen you look oppressed and out of spirits, that something—I have no idea what, Philip—was worrying you, and making you anxious; perhaps something that you don't like to tell me; and I have so often longed to beg you to trust me, and let me know if there is anything. I could bear it, Philip, indeed, indeed I could bear anything, if I only felt that you did really trust me."

He took her in his arms, and held her clasped in them, smoothing down her long fair hair.

"Poor child! poor child!" he said, and then there was a deep heavy sigh, as if it came from a whole world of oppression.

"Philip," she pleaded, returning to the charge, "if you have anything that worries you, do tell me. Whatever it is, I shall not mind."

"Not mind? That's a rash promise, Elsie. What if I were to tell you that I have sold myself to the demon, like Eleemon, for your sake?"

Rather hurt at being put off with jests like a silly girl, Mrs. Denbigh collected all her dignity and said: "You must not laugh at me, Philip. It was your old nurse who first began to be in a fidget about you. She infected me, I think. She has a fancy that you heard some bad news, or were vexed somehow, the night before we were married. Philip, where are you going? What is it?"

"The surgery bell," he answered, already at the door.

He was absent for some moments. Presently he came back.

"No ring. A mistake," he said. "Go on, Elsie. I am curious. I was not aware that Isott took so much interest in my proceedings. What did I hear or do on our wedding day?"

"The night before; but really it is nothing—only I had better tell you, that you may stop old Isott from gossiping;" and she told him all that the old woman had said, and her fancy that he might be suppressing some anxiety or trouble out of consideration for his wife.

"And you know, Philip, I never could bear that," she concluded; "anything but that, I should not care for."

"What would you say to me, Elsie, if I had loved you better than God and Heaven and my own soul?"

She looked up, half frightened. He watched her wistful face for a moment, then broke into a laugh.

"What a pity so much excitement should be thrown away! Did it never occur to you,

or to old Isott, my darling, that medical men sometimes get telegraphic messages at unwonted hours, and that they may look care-worn and speak sourly when they are worried out of their wits, without having some deadly secret on hand?"

"Telegraphic messages!" repeated Elsie, slowly, as if pondering over the idea; "was that really it? It was a telegraph office clerk, then, I suppose? You must think me a goose, Philip, for wondering who it could have been."

He smiled at her folly, then, crossing the room to a desk where he kept his private papers, brought her one of those pencil-written documents at which most of our hearts have sometimes beat high. It was a telegram from Briswick, relating to the state of a former patient, and bearing date the day before their marriage.

Elsie hung her head. He could not bear the sight of her ashamed look, and he stooped and kissed her forehead.

"I will speak to old Isott to-morrow," he said; "these confounded old women who have nursed one and washed one, as a baby, can never be brought to understand that one is old enough to be let alone."

"And you are not angry with me?"

"Angry with you? Oh! my poor child," he said, sitting down again with a heavy sigh, "I hoped I should have made you happy, and it seems I have only made you troubled, and anxious, and wretched. It would have been better for you if you'd never seen me."

"You must be angry with me, or you would not speak so," she answered. "You know I think myself the happiest woman in the world."

"At all events, you are my wife," he said, abruptly; "you have taken me for better for worse, my poor little thing, and you must 'dree your weird,' whatever comes. So sit down here, Elsie, and let me rest my head on your shoulder while I can, for I am very weary to-night, my love. Oh, Elsie, I am very, very weary."

In a few days he had quite recovered his strength, and plunged afresh into his many labours.

So the seasons came and went; winter succeeded to summer, and summer returned; and the peaceful stream of village life flowed on with little to break or trouble its course. In a very short time, as it seemed to Elsie Denbigh, the first anniversary of her marriage passed, and then the second passed, and now Christmas was over, and the third was at hand. Mr. Denbigh had prospered in all things; his reputation spread and his work increased, and his income grew, and he was cited in all the neighbourhood as the very picture of a deservedly successful man. His sweet wife was as much as ever the idol of his adoration, and during the last few months had been doubly the object of his tenderest care; for the crowning blessing, without which the happiest marriage must be incomplete, was now about to be granted to them. She was all

delight and thankfulness; but it somewhat troubled her that she could not quite arrive at a full perception of her husband's feelings on the matter. He smiled at her happiness, and was never tired of watching her joyous little matronly preparations; but, nevertheless, she saw—and wondered as she saw—that though he looked forward to the possession of their new treasure with intense interest, it was an interest largely mixed with trouble.

On a January morning she stood waiting for her husband to come down to breakfast: stood, idly watching the frost-bound garden and the whitened field, and the long icicles which hung from the boughs of the trees, and were reflected in the Abbot's Pool.

She turned, as he entered, rubbing his hands, and exclaiming against the cold. One of the first acts of his married life had been to set up a post-bag for his letters; and he had endured with perfect indifference the many remarks which this proceeding had brought upon him. The bag now lay on the table, and he proceeded to open it with the key which never left his watch-chain.

"This is vexatious," he said, after glancing through the one letter it contained. "Here am I summoned to London, to appear to-morrow before the committee about that Briswick work-house case. I must start to-day."

"That is tiresome; and to-morrow evening Mrs. Carter was to bring her children and her little nieces to drink tea here. You will miss them. What a pity."

"That I shall survive, I dare say; only don't you tire yourself, love, whatever you do. I shall try hard to get home the day after to-morrow."

"Indeed, I hope so. Why, the day after to-morrow is our wedding day!"

A search into the mysteries of Bradshaw made it evident that the doctor must leave Slowcombe by the train which started at one o'clock. As the coach passed through Sedgbrook at twelve, he said he would avail himself of it, and not risk his horse on the icy roads.

"And I will come and see you off," said his wife, pausing, as she moved away to her hurried preparations. He demurred, but gave way at the sight of her imploring face, saying:

"Well, well, I can't refuse you. But Jonathan shall follow in the pony trap, and drive you home. I won't have you sliding about these frosty lanes without my arm to lean upon."

Isott often remembered in after days how she watched them from the door; the strong husband accommodating his brisk step to the slow pace of his delicate wife, who clung to him more out of love for the strong supporting arm than because its stay was necessary to her. Others there were also, who told long afterwards how the pair walked together in close conversation up the village street; how he looked back after her from his seat, as long as the coach was in sight; and how mournfully she turned away.

The little party to which she had alluded was

on a very small scale, being merely an entertainment to the four vicarage children and two little cousins who were staying with them. The vicar and his wife were the only grown-up guests; but Mrs. Denbigh's life was such a quiet one, that she looked on the occasion as something of an event, and was anxious that her house should wear its prettiest aspect. She spent all that dull winter afternoon in renewing the Christmas holly which dressed the room, and tired herself thoroughly.

The hour fixed for her little party was, of course, an early one. By six o'clock in the evening the substantial tea was over, and they went to the drawing-room, where the children were to amuse themselves with games. "Magic music" was the first, and the children's interest was greatly heightened by Mrs. Denbigh announcing that the child who found the thing hidden, should keep it. A very animated scene followed, the little ones searching high and low, under tables, and behind curtains, as the music, now loud, now low, encouraged them to proceed or warned them that they were on a false scent. And when fat little Johnny Carter, a sturdy four years' old boy, the youngest of the vicarage children, discovered that the prize was buried in the white Astrachan hearth-rug, what a merry shout there was, and how delighted the little hero looked, as he undid the roll of paper in which it was enveloped, and brought out a quaint old Father Christmas, whose head unscrewed, and showed all his venerable body stuffed with sugar-plums!

"How very pretty Mrs. Denbigh is looking to-night," Mrs. Carter whispered to her husband; "one never grows used to her beauty; it strikes one afresh constantly, does not it?"

"Remarkably well she looks; that black velvet suits her exactly, and she is wonderfully brightened up to-night."

She was indeed in unusual beauty; her fair skin and blue eyes set off to peculiar advantage by her dress, which, with its square cut bodice and hanging sleeves, had the quaint effect of an old picture. She wore a set of heavy old-fashioned silver ornaments, and her sweet face looked its sweetest.

"You must not tire yourself," said Mrs. Carter, smiling at her, as she again took her place at the piano.

"Oh, this does not tire me," she said. "It is so nice to see the children happy? I wish Philip were here."

"Do you?" thought Mrs. Carter, "I can't agree with you. I wonder why I dislike that man so.—When do you expect him?" she asked aloud.

"Perhaps to-morrow."

"There is Isott making telegraphic signals at the door," said Mrs. Carter; "I think she wants you."

Mrs. Denbigh went to the door, and the old servant drew her into the hall; her shrewd honest face wearing a look of perplexity, as she said:

"Here be a man a come as wants to see master; and if master bain't at home, he wants to see the missus—so he says. What be I to do?"

"What sort of man is he?"

"Why, a queer sort of chap, ma'am, like to a furriner; only he bain't a furriner neither, I don't think; sum'at in the seafaring line he might be, unless he be a tramp all the time and after the spoons; but I've a showed 'im into that there surgery parlour, and 'a won't get much out o' that, unless 'tis pills and draughts."

"Did you tell him," asked Elsie, "that Mr. Denbigh will be at home to-morrow, or the day after, at latest?"

"Yes, I did; and he says you'll do every bit as well as master. He's sorry to ill-convenience you, so he says, but he 'ont keep you not one minute."

"Just stay in the vestibule while I go in, Isott," said her mistress. "Is there a light? Yes? Then I'll come directly." And having explained her absence to Mrs. Carter, and asked her to take her place at the piano for a few moments, Mrs. Denbigh crossed the vestibule and went into the surgery parlour.

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